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February 1992

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MAPS AND TIPS:

Sega's *Phantasy Star III*, Part II



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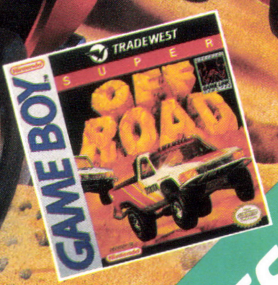
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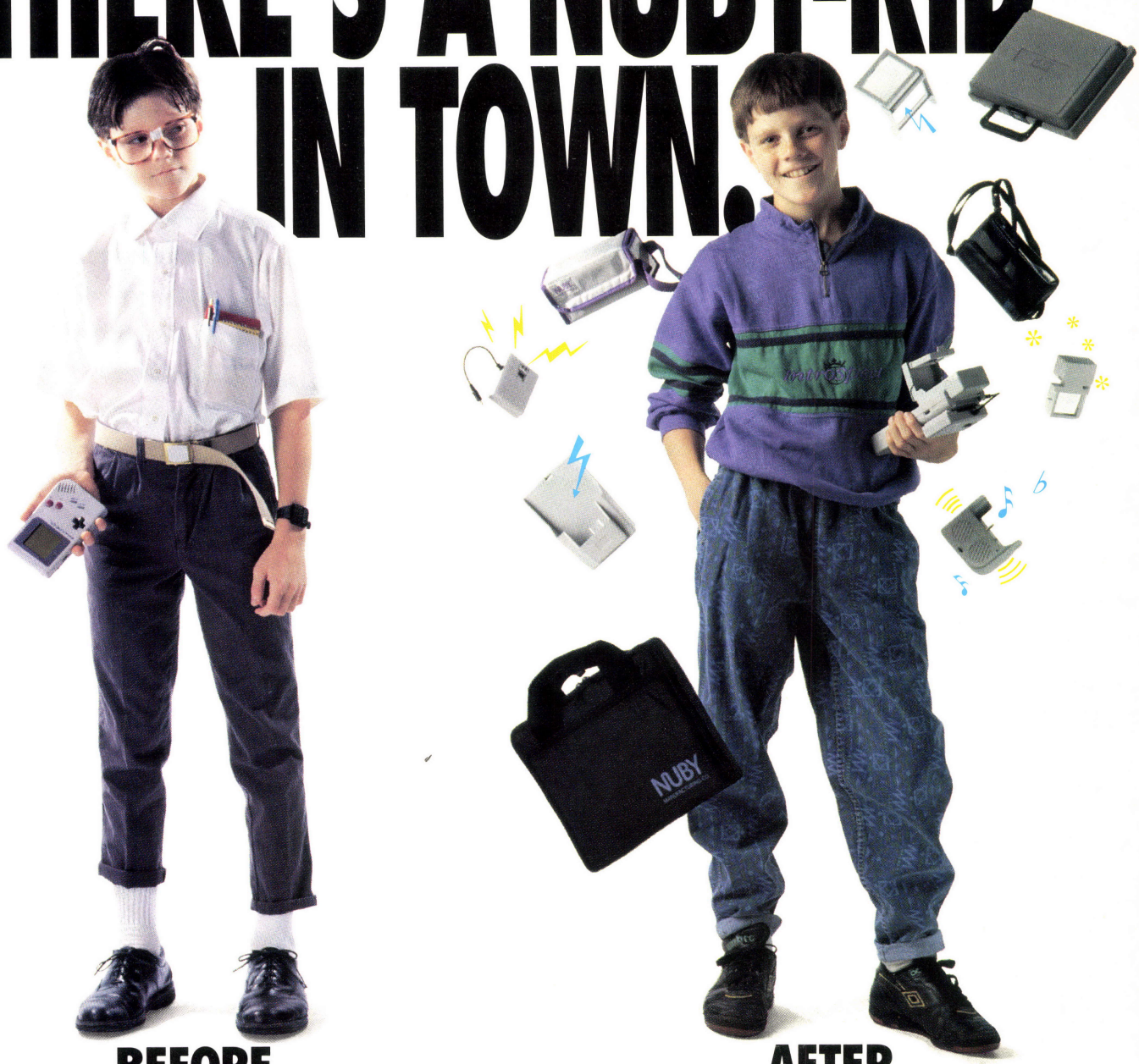
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Cover: It's that time of the year again. The competition was fierce and relentless in 1991, but the vote is in. Turn to page 66 for a look at VG&CE's third annual picks of the best.

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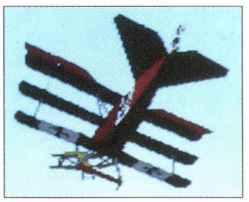
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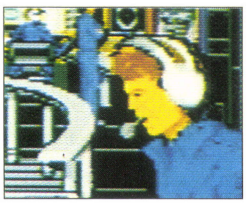




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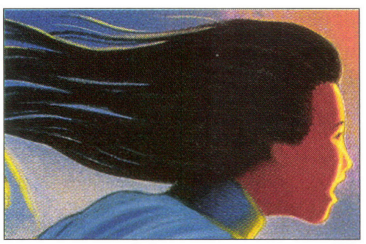


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VG&CE'S BEST GAMES OF 1991

by the Editors of VG&CE

The past year has produced some of the best computer and video games ever seen. VG&CE's writers and editors have made up their minds on what was the year's best, and we would like to show you.



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PHANTASY STAR III PLAYER'S GUIDE, PART II

by Clayton Walnum

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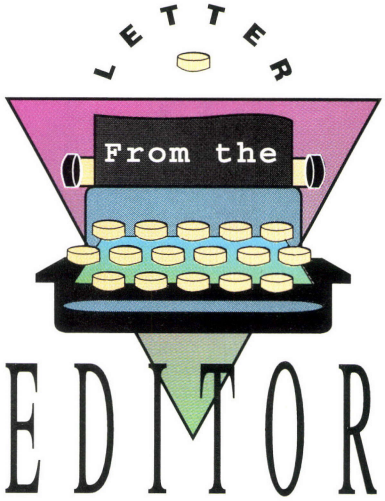
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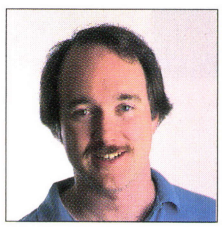
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It's quite interesting to look back on past issues of VG&CE to see where the videogame industry stands in relation to its history. Did people learn by their mistakes? Certainly things moved forward, as expected, due to growing technology. What used to be 16 colors is now 256 colors in some games. What used to be double-digit sprite counts are now in triple digits.

But the question I have is: Have people really learned? Are we all one *happy* family?



I have my doubts. Way back in the October 1989 issue of VG&CE, I commented on the then-current issue of how lawyers were becoming as important in software developments—perhaps more important, in some instances—as the game developers themselves. At that point, Nintendo was embroiled in various legal actions with Tengen, a company that chose to go out on its own and do NES games outside of Nintendo's control.

Now we've witnessed Nintendo's biggest competitor, Sega, taking somewhat the same tack as it tries to maintain its leadership in the 16-bit market. Recently, we've seen suits filed (and since settled) between Sega and Razor Soft. As I write this, we've gotten press releases from Sega and Accolade detailing legal action between the two companies. The evolving lawsuits are over Accolade's "right" to do Genesis software under its Ballistix label, which sells cartridges outside of Sega's third-party licensing program. Suddenly it sounds like Nintendo vs. Tengen all over again.

As I said two-and-a-half years ago, I'm not trained in law, so I may be talking through my hat on this. I also don't know the full details of the Sega/Accolade case, as it's just being formulated, but I find the whole thing kind of sad. Have console manufacturers gotten so greedy that they have to try to get their hands on a share of every cartridge that enters their machine? What happened to free enterprise? And it's the player who suffers, having to pay extra for the hardware that is used to attempt to lock out unauthorized software from running. Additionally, time and money devoted to legal affairs could be better spent—at least in my view, for what that's worth—in creating better software for the current machine or designing even higher-powered hardware. But, instead, a whole lot of energy is being spent to prevent others from selling the fruits of their labors to the yearning public. *If you can't play by our rules, you can't play at all*, it seems.

I said it in my October 1989 editorial, and it still seems to ring true: It's disturbing for me to think that the lawyers are getting bigger offices than the programmers.

—Andy Eddy, Executive Editor

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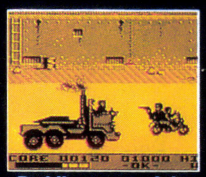
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READER MAIL

HOW EVERYBODY GETS THEIR KICKS

Dear VG&CE:

I need your help. I have ordered games because of your editorials and have been exceptionally pleased. I have faith in your opinions. I also have a subscription now, too. Anyway, I rely on what you say for my purchases. (It's not the bucks, it's the time spent on the docs learning the games that makes me particular about what I get.)

Down to the nitty gritty of it all: I'm 38 years old and enjoy thinking games, but I also like "kick-their-face-in" games, too. What I mean is, *Punch Out* and *Double Dragon* stuff. My NES is gathering dust, and rightfully so since I discovered IBM PC computer games, but I would like an article from your staff on what would be good kick, punch, smash, crunch types of games [for the PCs]. I see *Budokan* and *Bruce Lee Lives* listed in the advertisements (Chips and Bits, for example), and I'd like to know what to get. I would like a game that gives more than a single punch and/or a single kick—you know, realistic fighting, with jabs, punches, spinning backfists, front kicks, back kicks, hook kicks and different types of weapons, too. I was into my fourth year in karate before I got injured (to the point where I had to quit). I'm also a Texas peace officer, so it's not like I'm unfamiliar with this kind of thing, but you know the games far better than I, and I need your advice. So puh-leeze help me!

—Steve Gatewood
Brownsville, Texas

PS: I got your magazine because I was into NES games, and as I was reading the reviews, I also began reading the computer-game reviews. I thought, "Could they really be that involved and exciting?" So I tried them, and, as I said, my NES is gathering dust. Wow! Thank you for opening my horizons by about two thousand percent! Now I am pleased to have a subscription to your magazine because of the computer information and reviews. Thank you, thank you and...thank you.

And we'd like to thank you for the kind sentiments, Steve. It's nice to hear from a satisfied customer.

Regarding your request for an article on beat-'em-up games, we'll take that into consideration for a future issue. For the time being, as you mentioned, Budokan *is something that we would recommend. Others that our computer-game experts (namely, Arnie Katz, Joyce Worley and Bill Kunkel) noted were* Wide World of Sports Boxing *(Data East) and* 4-D Boxing *(Electronic Arts), as well as the fighting scenes in* Rocket Ranger *(Cinemaware). We hope this gets you on track.*

SLIPPED DISC

Dear VG&CE:

When I first saw your coverage of the Super Famicom, I was astonished at the detail of the information, which therefore led me to buy a Super NES. But now that the Mega-CD is out in Japan for the Mega Drive, I was expecting a lot of the great coverage that your magazine offers. But when I received your latest issue, I was very disappointed to see that you had no coverage on it whatsoever. So, if you could start doing some coverage on the Mega Drive CD-ROM, it would really make my day. I have also been wondering if it will be coming with a game, and, if so, what game it will be coming with. Also, will it play CD+G discs?

I also have one final question: When will the modem be coming out for the Genesis? When the Genesis first came out, there was a lot of talk about it, and then all of a sudden there wasn't a word about it.

Thank you for taking the time to read my questions. By the way, I love your magazine. It's the best.

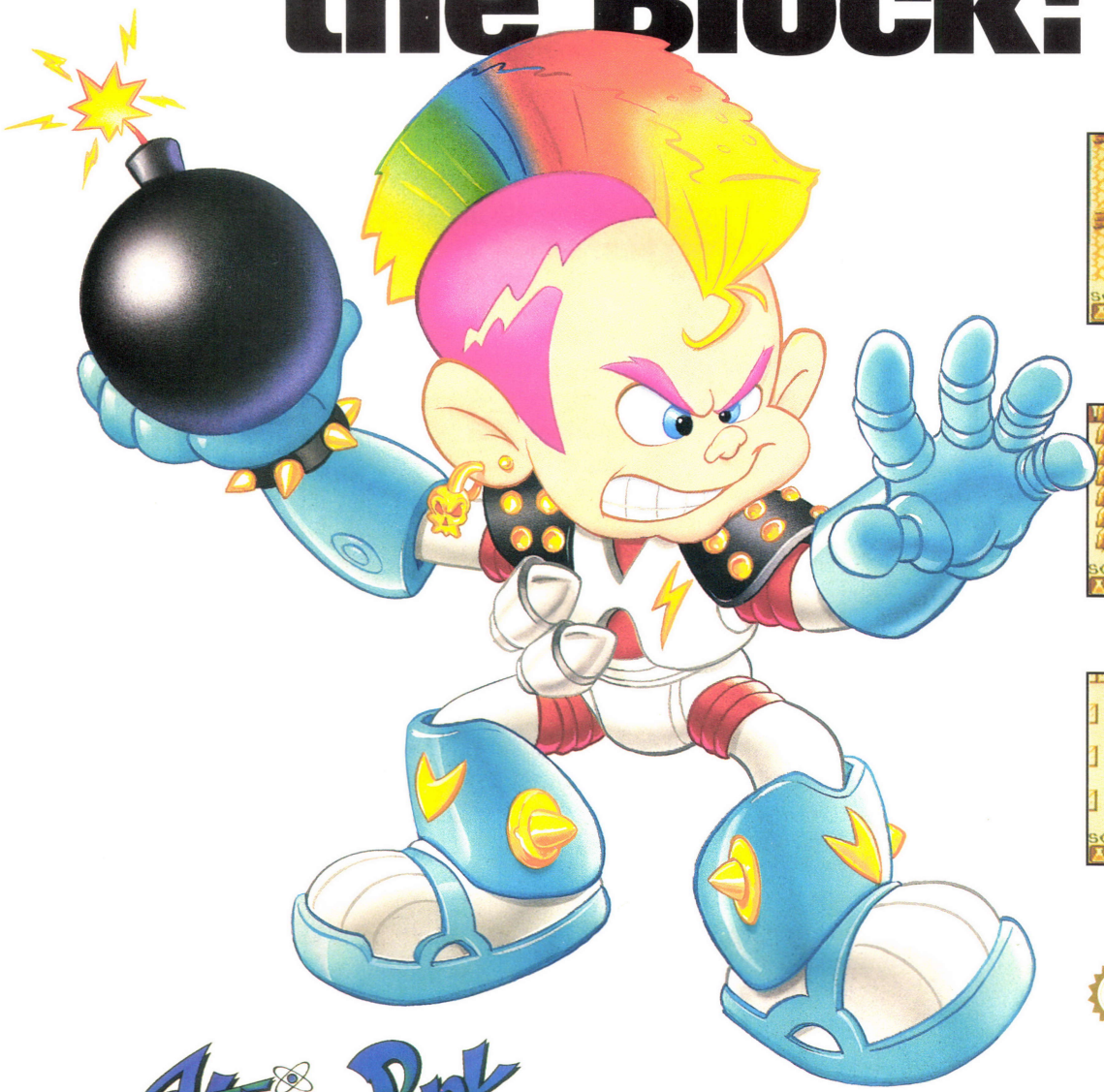
—Sasan Behnood
Anaheim, California

The release of the Super Famicom was a little different than the release of the Mega Drive CD Player for a number of reasons. For one, the SF is a full-fledged system, as opposed to a peripheral. It was also the first system to be released in a number of years from Nintendo, something that many people felt was of great importance to the video-game industry.

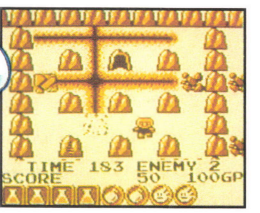
Not to diminish the impact that the Mega Drive CD will have on the market, but it's an optional peripheral—and one that, due to its price, will appeal to a smaller segment of the game-playing community. Also, we have a strong editorial commitment not to cover something too early in its existence. A good example is the Atari Panther, a console that most people in the industry were aware was in development, yet ended up being scrapped in

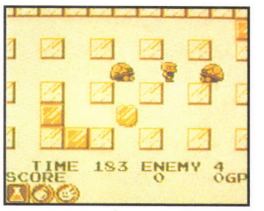
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CIRCLE #106 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

favor of another project. While other magazines may concentrate on being first, we'd rather be right.

The same goes for the Mega Drive CD Player—or the Sega Genesis Mega CD, as it will be called here. We know as we write this (early November) that Sega is going to officially announce the CD unit at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show, which takes place in Chicago at the end of May. We haven't received firm details on what game(s) will be bundled with the Sega Genesis Mega CD, how much it will cost or when its exact release date will be. We expect to get that data soon, and, when we do, we'll pass it on to our readers. We want to fill the pages of VG&CE with quality information on products that you can pick up in your local store. Even with that policy, we have gotten caught writing about things that were later scrapped, such as Space Invaders *for the Game Boy,* Mondu's Fight Palace *for the Genesis (which is getting a second chance as* SlaughterSport *from Razor Soft) and...the TeleGenesis Modem.*

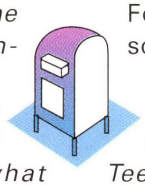
Seeing that we've mentioned it... onto the subject of the famed TeleGenesis Modem, which Sega announced so long ago: It appears that, for all intents and purposes, the modem won't be released in the U.S.—at least, it's not on Sega's list of products to be released soon. Great name, but....

A QUARTER FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

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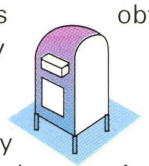
Just recently I saw a graphic in *USA Today*. It showed the percentage of quarters that were spent on coin-operated amusement machines for 1980 and 1990. It showed that, in 1980, there were more quarters being spent on video games than on pinball. In 1990, the reverse was true. I believe that this is due to the fact that, in 1980, video games were a new, innovative idea that people found exciting.

I remember clearly the number of quarters that I spent in 1980. In 1990, video games have become the same old thing over and over again. Even though the video games boast very good graphics and sound effects, it seems like once you've played one, you've played them all.



For example, *The Simpsons* has some sharp graphics and sound effects. It's almost like watching the program on TV, but the game play is very much like *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. In fact, I haven't dropped a *single* quarter in the game. I still like to play *Space Invaders* whenever I find the game!

Pinball has taken an increase in the percentage of quarters that are spent on amusement devices. This is perhaps because the pinball manufacturers have come up with some very innovative designs and ideas in pinball. I would like to give my next paycheck to meet Steve Ritchie, the man behind such classics as *High Speed* and soon-to-be-classics such as *Terminator 2*. (I still play *High Speed* at my campus game room, and I just recently purchased *High Speed* for my NES. I enjoy it very much.) The only major gripe I have with pinball is some of these arcades like to set their machines for 50¢ games, and you get only three balls of play. I don't care how innovative a pinball game is, if I have to spend 50¢ to play it, I expect five balls of play and a decent free-game score to go for. I've played some games where the free-game score is set so high that it practically requires an act of God to get a replay.



I hope this is of some interest to you and the readers of this fine magazine.

—Steven Konopa
Westerville, Ohio

Thanks for the info, Steven, and your points are probably correct. There are very few video games that are "pushing the envelope" with regards to innovation—with the exception of some of Namco's and Atari's latest, as well as Sega's Time Traveler—*while pinball has gone past rolling score counters and bells to animated LED score displays and digitized voices on chips. As you said, Williams'* Terminator 2 *is about as high-tech as it can get, with a pistol grip instead of a plunger, a moving cannon for some bonus shots and a ton of Schwarzenegger dialogue. It even has a video game that you play on its scoreboard.*

The other reason we see for pinball's popularity is that the games are so kinetic. There's nothing more exciting than getting multiball and trying to hit a critical ramp, while keeping an eye on all three balls at once.

Thanks for your views, Steven. It's something for the game makers to consider when they are deciding the future of video games.

A CABLE OF A DIFFERENT COLOR

Dear VG&CE:

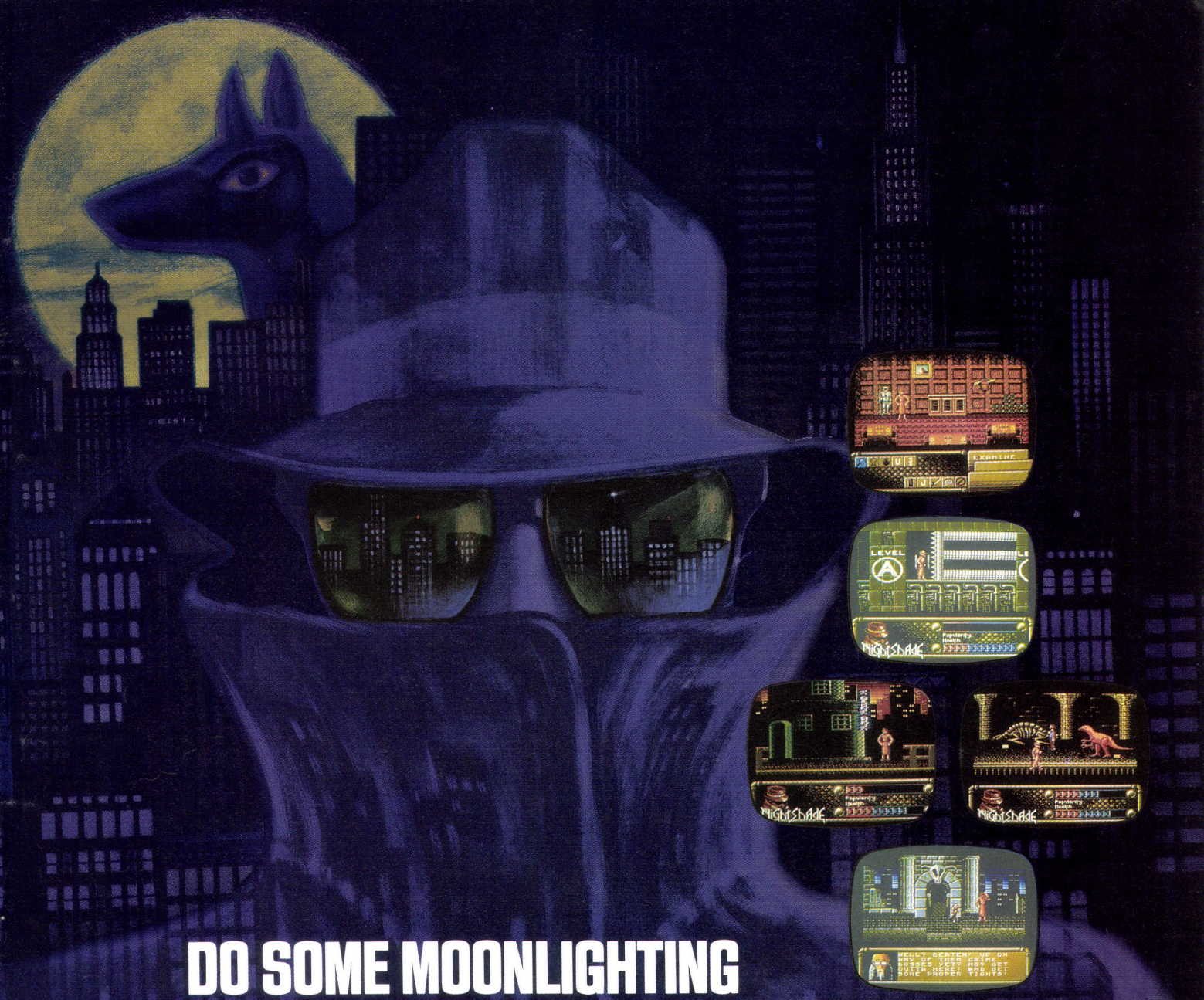
Somewhere in one of your magazines way long ago, I came across a discussion about the Sega Genesis being capable of being attached to an RGB monitor. My question is, is this also true of the Super NES? If so, how? That way I don't have to obtain a TV.

Great mag. Keep it up!

—Jeremy Pyhala
Rindge, New Hampshire

According to Nintendo and the documentation that comes with the Super NES, there are no plans for an RGB cable for the system. Currently, you can use either the RF cable or video/stereo audio cable that comes with the console, or order (for $19.95 and $2 shipping and handling) a cable that outputs in Super VHS format. There is talk of an RGB cable out of Japan, but nothing has surfaced to date.

In the meantime, we'll set our experts to the task of seeing if it's possible to get RGB output from the SNES, even as a modification (though it will likely void your warranty). We'll post the information in a future VG&CE, if it can be done.



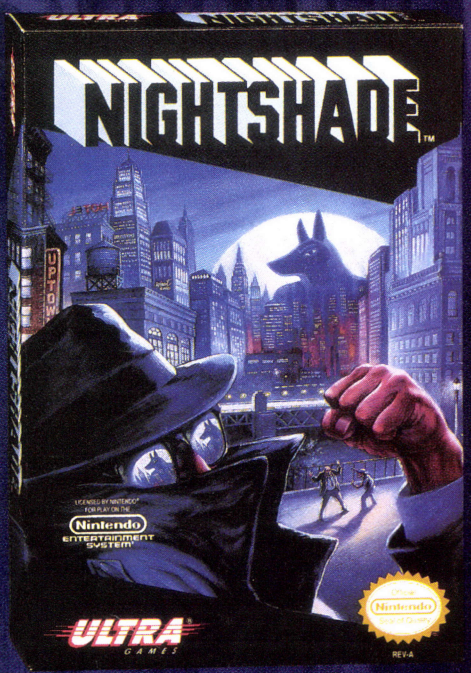
DO SOME MOONLIGHTING AS A CRIME FIGHTER.

Night falls like a black shroud over Metro City, and the ancient Egyptian villain Sutekh goes to work. And so do you. For you are the mysterious, unknown hero who lurks in the corners, melts into the shadows, and rules the darkness. You are Nightshade for the NES™!

Infiltrate one hundred of the city's most seedy recesses while chasing thieves, thugs and muggers you must squeeze for clues, or destroy. Question dangerous characters, and hunt for hidden objects like force gloves and energy domes. All essential for survival as you fend off the hired assassins hot on your tail.

Follow Sutekh's trail of treachery too closely and you'll be figuring out how to escape the jackal pit, the human printing press, the closing wall of spikes, and other traps. Use your powers of intellect and keep your eyes open and your mind alert. Or you'll no longer control the night, you'll be consumed by it.

ULTRA® GAMES



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CIRCLE #112 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

CRUSH THE WORLD'S GREATEST FIGHTERS WITH YOUR THUMB.



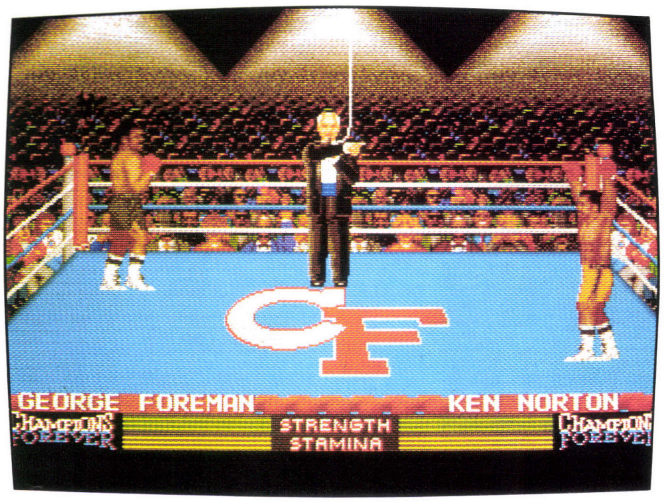
Ken Norton, Heavyweight Champion 1978; George Foreman, Heavyweight Champion 1973-74; Larry Holmes, Heavyweight Champion, 1978-85; Joe Frazier, Heavyweight Champion, 1970-73, Muhammad Ali, Heavyweight Champion, 1964-67, 1974-78, 1978-79.

© 1991 NEC Technologies, Inc. Champions Forever Boxing game © 1991 Distinctive Software, Inc. Champions Forever™ &© 1989 Champions Forever, Inc. André Panza Kick Boxing game © 1991 Futura-Loriciel. André Panza Kick Boxing screen enlarged for detail.

Ali, Norton, Holmes, Frazier and Foreman are ready to pound your face...er, thumb. You can be them or battle them. Each champ looks and fights like the real thing. Ali floats like a butterfly and stings like a bee. Foreman puts his weight into devastating round-house punches.

Taunt them if you've got the guts. Move and jab, or go toe-to-toe and rearrange their faces with nose bloodying hooks, jaw shattering uppercuts, and rib-cracking body shots. Block punches or clinch to protect yourself. Between round closeups show each boxer's facial damage.

If exhibition matches aren't enough for you, fight an entire 15-year career. Crush these five formidable boxing greats and POW! you're a champion forever.

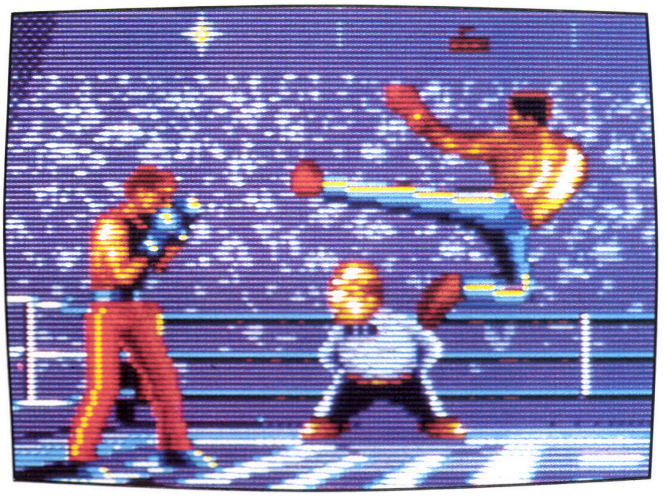


Come out swinging but don't hit the guy in the tux.

BOXING
CHAMPIONS FOREVER

He's lean. He's mean. He's André Panza and he's out for blood. Every move he makes is from digitized film footage from his greatest kicks and punches. So you're not fighting some namby pamby, make-believe video kick boxing creep. You're duking it out with the master, 3-time World Kick Boxing Champion André Panza.

If you're not ready for Panza, whip yourself into shape with training and conditioning sessions. Then battle through the ranks of 8 international champions.



Watch your head! Air assault!

André Panza
KICK BOXING

Over 40 mind-blowing punches and kicks allow you to customize your assault. Once you've honed and sharpened your moves, take on Panza himself for the ultimate kick boxing challange.

So what are you waiting for? Chicken? Then get **Champions Forever Boxing** and **André Panza Kick Boxing** and start rearranging some faces with your thumb.



Available at: Toys R Us, Babbage's, Electronics Boutique, Montgomery Ward, Software Etc., McDuff Electronics, VideoConcepts, Sears Catalog, Waldensoftware and other leading retailers.

For information on these games, call the TurboTeam at 1-900-FUN-TG16. The first 30 seconds are free, 99¢ per minute thereafter, maximum $5 per call. Get your parents' permission first.

CIRCLE #108 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Even the best player has trouble with a game now and again, but where can you turn for help? VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT has designed ***Tip Sheet*** to give you, the reader, answers to questions such as, "How do I defeat the end boss on this level?" or, "I've looked everywhere, but I can't find the blue vase." So if you're having a problem on a game, write to us, and our group of experts will do everything they can to solve it. Send your letters to:

VG&CE,

9171 Wilshire Blvd.,

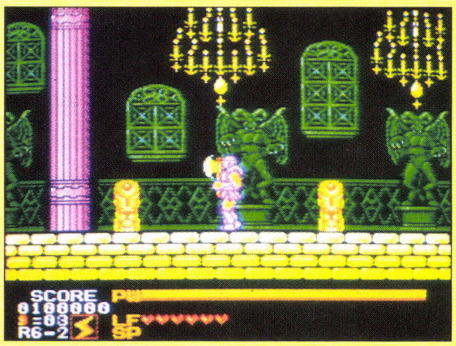
Suite 300

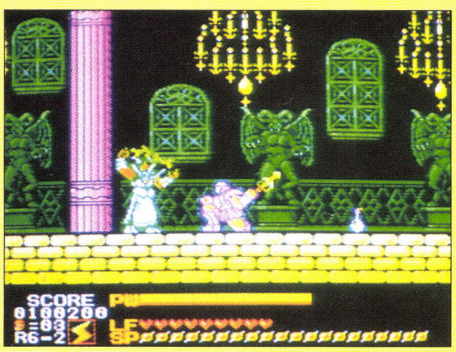
Beverly Hills, CA 90210

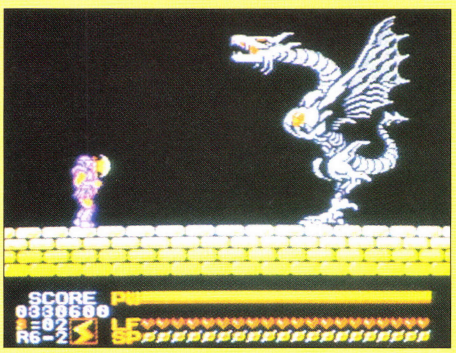
Attn: ***Tip Sheet***

TIP SHEET

by Donn Nauert







Whenever I get to Blackhorn in the NES game *Astyanax*, I beat him once, but run out of magic and barely have any energy to finish the level. Are there any shortcuts? Also, are there any passwords besides the level select?

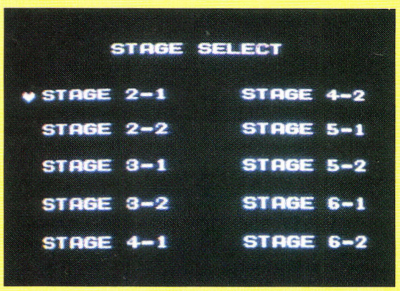
One more thing, whenever I push U, U, D, L, R and U during the title screen for invincibility, nothing happens. Is this the right code or is there something wrong with my game? And in which part of the title screen are you supposed to do it?

—Alan Lanoie
Kings Mountain, North Carolina

As you approach Blackhorn, you'll notice that there are three stone idols that have various items within them. The first one, which appears only after you pass it going to the right, contains a weapon power-up. If you have the ax, don't get this, but if you have the spear, make sure you get it. Basically, you don't want the spear at this point. The second stone idol contains a blue life potion. Do not *get this as you pass by the first time. When you reach Blackhorn, you'll be given full life and magic, so this would be a waste. The third stone idol contains a power supply—you can get this if you want to.*

When you begin fighting Blackhorn, immediately move to the left of the second stone statue then *uncover the blue potion, but* don't *get it yet. You can stand in place and turn back and forth as Blackhorn appears. Once you defeat Blackhorn, you'll walk to the right of the screen. As you pass over the blue potion, you'll get full life back. Since you didn't use any magic, your magic gauge also will be intact.*

For invincibility you must press U, U, U, U, D, L, R, U and then ***START*** *during the title screen. There's only one title screen. It says PUSH START BUTTON across the screen.*



The Greatest NES™ Adventure Continues...

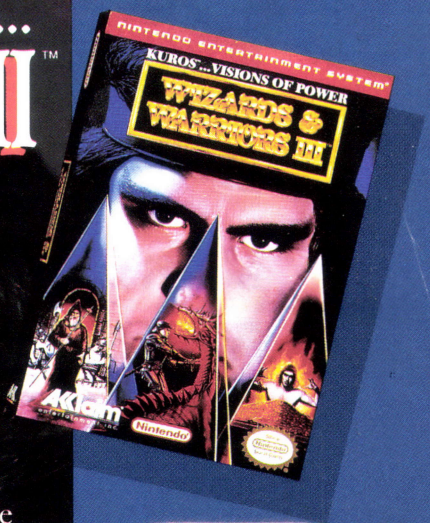
WIZARDS & WARRIORS III™

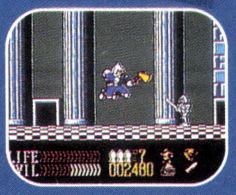
Kuros:™ Visions of Power™

When Kuros™ last did battle with the evil wizard Malkil™ atop Icefire Mountain, he raised his IronSword™ in triumph...or so he thought.

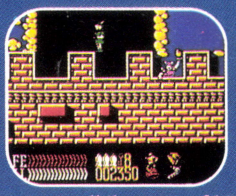
Without warning, a powerful bolt of magic robbed Kuros of his armour, memory, and honor. But now, the distant presence of evil stirs in his mind, leading him to the once fair city of Piedup, where the villainous *soul* of Malkil now reigns.

Without his armour, Kuros will need crafty disguises to travel undetected, ready to do battle as wizard, nobleman or thief. From the gloomy depths of the dungeon to the palace containing riches beyond belief...the time has come for Kuros to turn his visions of power into reality!

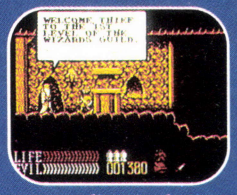




Kuros the Knight Warrior wields his mighty Silver-Sword in the face of danger.



To give Malkil a taste of his own medicine, Kuros must master the craft of wizardry.



Kuros, disguised as a thief, moves secretly through Piedup.



Grotesque creatures of the underworld stand between Kuros and his ultimate battle.

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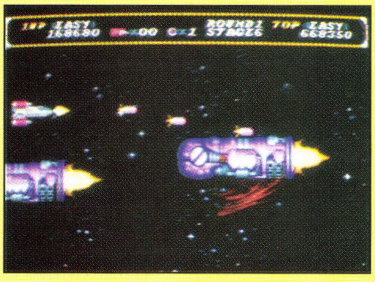
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CIRCLE #104 ON READER SERVICE CARD.











I've owned *Hellfire* for my Genesis for almost two months and I still cannot get past Level 6 on "easy." I desperately need help because this game is driving me crazy. I would appreciate any codes, tips—anything. Would the codes for a Japanese version of a game still work on an American version?

—Javan Bradshaw
Scarborough, Ontario, Canada

My first suggestion would be to play this game with the Power Stick or something with auto-fire on it. You will find auto-fire helps.

To get by the three mini-bosses, you need to know the best place to shoot from on-screen.

- *For the first mini-boss, try to work your way around to the top so you can fire onto its roof.*
- *On the second mini-boss, shoot it right in the "nose" for the easy kill.*
- *For the third mini-boss, try to get above the ship and fire down on top of it.*
- *And for the final end boss, you'll need to shoot its head when it drops its shield.*

When I bought my Mega Drive overseas, I thought it was compatible with Genesis and Mega Drive cartridges. It worked fine with games from both systems until I bought the game *Budokan* from Electronic Arts. It didn't work, so I took it back to the store. They tried the game, and it worked fine. I was wondering if you could tell me what is wrong and what I can do to correct it. Thank you.

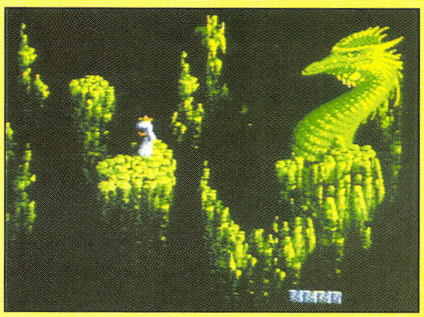
—En Jang Hsu
Covina, California

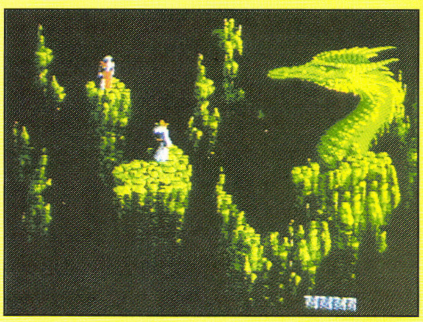
Sega recently told us they modified the Genesis, and that three games (that we know of right now) do not work on the new Genesis: Budokan, Populous *and* Zany Golf. *It's possible that this will also include Accolade/Ballistix games and Mega Drive games; any game that doesn't have the Sega of America Seal of Approval stands a good chance of not working.*

If you own a Mega Drive and the game doesn't work, we have no idea what to tell you. Unfortunately, when you buy an import system, there is no guarantee that it will work with American game carts.

I purchased the NES game *The Immortal*, and have passed all the levels without problem, until now. I am now in the seventh level, and I have no idea what to do against the dragon. I have found the hidden trapdoor and have all the items I need: blink, fire protection, magnetic hands, statue, the amulet and 200 gold pieces. I have tried using them in several orders without success. The most that I have done is to make a small, red wizard appear on the ledge above me. I would appreciate it if, in one of your next issues, you would print the answer to my question.

—Daryn Murphy
Palm Harbor, Florida

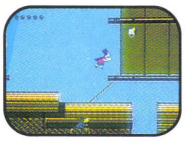
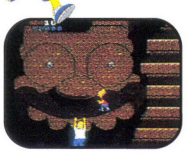




When you first go against the dragon, use the blink spell. When you have used all six blinks, wait for him to breathe fire on you for the seventh time, but, at the last minute, switch to the fire protection spell, then immediately use the amulet. Hold it up to the light, but don't read it. Be careful on the seventh breath, because the dragon will do a double pump before it actually breathes fire. Now you're ready to fight Mordamir.

IT'S BARTMANIA
FOR YOUR NES™ AND GAME BOY®!

Gang way, man! It's Bartmania three ways for your  and  ! Looking for some wild  ? Then help  save Springfield from the  in THE SIMPSONS™ BART VS. THE SPACE MUTANTS™ for your NES.™ For Simpsons™ antics on the go, join  as they fight for their lives in BART SIMPSONS™ ESCAPE FROM CAMP DEADLY run by  . Look for Bart as  ,

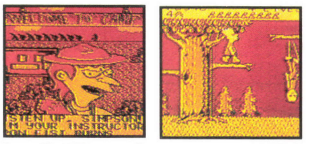



Homer has his hands full vacationing at the Krusty Sphinx but maybe Bartman can save the day in "Bart vs. the World" for your NES!



and in their all-new NES™ adventure BART VS. THE WORLD™ . It's all-out mayhem around the from  to  as Burns and Smithers try to get rid of the Simpsons™ once and for all. Don't let that happen ... Save Springfield ... Save the Simpsons™ ... Save the World ... Keep

KEEP BARTMANIA ALIVE!



Ironfist Burns has some special plans for his "happy campers" in "Escape from Camp Deadly" for Game Boy!



Only Bart can save Springfield from the alien invasion in "Bart vs. the Space Mutants" for your NES!

BUY THESE GAMES!



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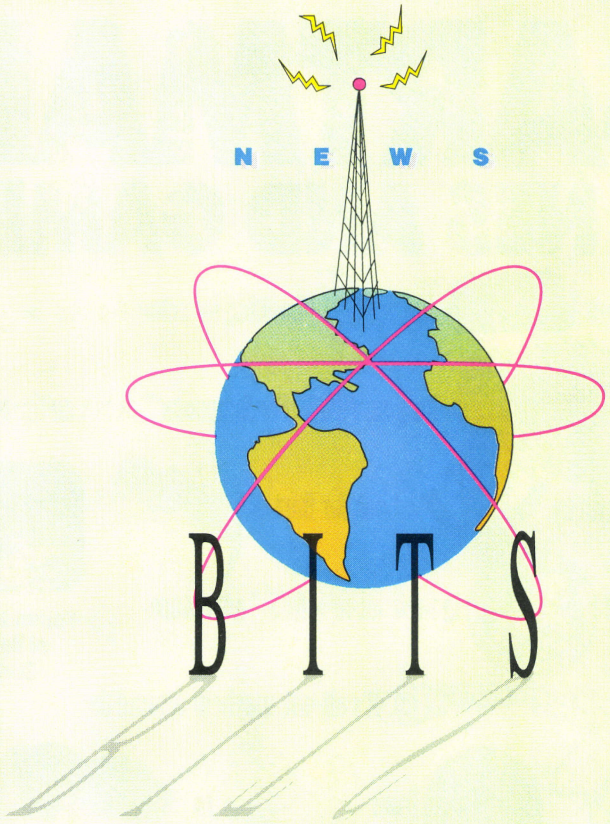
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CIRCLE #104 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

COMPILED BY
JOYCE WORLEY

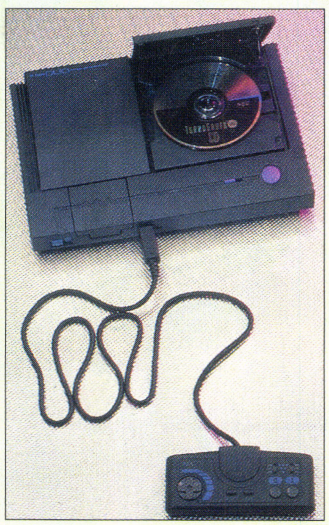


NEC Shows PC Engine Duo at Winter CES

In a bold move, NEC Technologies displayed its combined 16-bit video-game system and CD-ROM unit at the Las Vegas Winter Consumer Electronics Show. Introduced to the Japanese public last September, the PC Engine Duo is an upgraded hybrid unit of NEC's PC Engine (the Japanese TurboGrafx-16) and CD-ROM player.

The CD-ROM unit built into the "Duo" has four times the memory capacity of the currently available CD-ROM, allowing disc-based games to have uninterrupted play action.

Software for the Duo is already under development in the U.S., and current owners of the TurboGrafx-CD player will be given the opportunity to upgrade their systems with a low-priced, expanded-memory chip card.



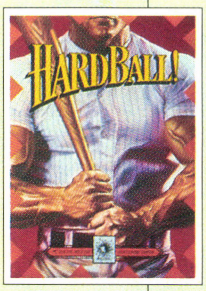
The Duo is expected to be available in the U.S. as early as next fall, while an upgrade card for TurboGrafx-CD owners may be available by this spring.

Sega Sues Accolade

Legal troubles continue to plague the video-game software community. The latest action pits Sega Enterprises Ltd. in a lawsuit against Accolade. The suit alleges that Accolade, under its Ballistix line of 16-bit video-game software, developed and distributed Sega Genesis products that infringe on proprietary trademarks.

Accolade responded by dismissing the claims as being "frivolous, without merit and in some cases facetious." According to Alan Miller, president and CEO of Accolade: "Yesterday's announcement is yet another attempt by Sega to force Accolade into agreeing to what amounts to a non-negotiable, third-party licensing arrangement. Our position on this issue is firm, and we do not intend to allow this suit to prevent Accolade from continuing to bring its highest-quality, best-selling products to retailers and to consumers."





Miller went on to say: "We have never claimed to be a licensee of Sega, and we do not believe our packaging suggests that we are.... Accolade needs no endorsement from Sega to sell its products."

Sega and Razor Soft Settle

Sega of America and its parent company, Sega Enterprises Ltd. of Tokyo, announced settlement of the pending lawsuits between them and Razor Soft International and its subsidiaries, Razor Soft Inc., Software X-Change Inc. and Punk Development Inc. Under terms of the agreement, Razor Soft will continue to be an authorized, Sega third-party publisher.

Razor Soft's president, Kyle Shelly, acknowledged that the company had used copyrights, trademarks and trade dress without approval when it initially released units of *StormLord*. "The advantages of the Sega Genesis system are now well understood by the trade and consumers alike, and we are confidently preparing for the release of our upcoming titles for the Sega Genesis," Shelly said.

Shinobu Toyoda, executive vice-president of Sega of America, had this to say: "The swift resolution of this matter should be to the benefit of all companies involved. Sega's continued relationship with Razor Soft and our 23 other authorized third-party software publishers will continue to strengthen the leadership position of the Sega Genesis system. Sega's third-party program ensures the continued development of a wealth of innovative games."

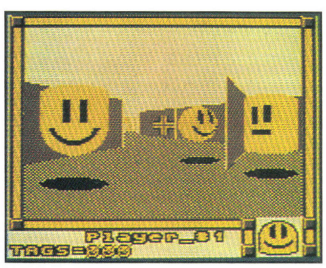
Filter Protects Eyes From VDT Glare

Optical Coating Laboratory Inc. has introduced a new slip-on monitor shield that promises to protect computer users from glare

Wipe the smile off this face!

(And maybe a few of your friends, too!)

Here's your chance to wipe the smiles off those annoying happy faces once and for all! In FaceBall 2000, "Have a Nice Day" takes on a whole new meaning— in first-person perspective, with 3D graphics and 360° maneuvering!



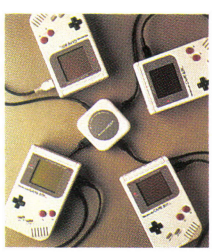
WATCH OUT! They only look happy!

Get into your Game Boy...

And we mean *into!* FaceBall 2000 is a new virtual reality game. You don't just *see* your character, you *are* your character. Feel like you're actually inside your Game Boy as you move through CyberScape's more than 70 treacherous mazes — or the Arena, in fast-paced rounds of high-tech combat.

Bring your friends along!

Sure. You can take on the Smiloids alone. But with your Game Link™ cable or Four Player Adapter, those faces can belong to your friends! Play one-on-one, two against two, or free-for-all!



More than four times the fun with the Four Player Adapter!



It pay$ to play together.

Don't miss your chance to get up to $5 back with our multiplayer rebate! You'll find all the info inside your FaceBall 2000 package when you open it up for the game of your life! But hurry. Some of your friends might be buying FaceBall 2000 right now. If they get in too much practice without you, the smile that gets wiped might be your own!

FACEBALL 2000

A whole new way to get into your Game Boy.

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and electric-field radiation. The Glare/Guard Universal Profile fits most 12- to 15-inch monitors and reduces glare by up to 99%.



The new design includes a flexible lip and conforms to the monitor, sealing out light and dust, to provide a customized look. The optically coated glass filter is said to improve contrast, resolution and viewability, while helping to reduce eyestrain, headaches and blurred vision. Glare/Guard Universal Profile models start at $69.95.

Optical Coating
Laboratory Inc.
2789 Northpoint Parkway
Santa Rosa, CA 95407
(707) 545-6440.

Spectrum HoloByte Joins "Virtuality" Group

Spectrum HoloByte has entered into an agreement with Horizon Entertainment and W Industries to form a new software publishing firm. The new entity, Cyberstudio, will create software for the Virtuality Entertainment System, manufactured in the United Kingdom by W Industries and distributed in the U.S. by Horizon (a division of Edison Brothers Stores Inc., of St. Louis).

Virtuality is a location-based entertainment system that puts the arcade gamer into a computer-generated 3-D world with stereoscopic depth vision, quadraphonic sound and 360-degree action. Players sit or stand inside the Virtuality unit, equipped with special headsets, gloves and joysticks, and compete either against the computer or each other. Virtuality systems will be placed in mall locations, and cost of play is expected to be $1 per minute, with a game taking about three minutes.

Spectrum HoloByte plans to modify and enhance existing software for the high-tech system and to develop original titles, including its own *Falcon 3.0* and *Avenger A-10*. The first of the new games is expected to be ready in early 1993.

Brøderbund Plans Public Offering; Extends Maxis' Agreement

Brøderbund Software has filed a registration statement with the Securities and Exchange Commission, and plans an initial public offering of common stock. Over 3 million shares will be offered in the initial filing, at an estimated price of $9.50 to $11 per share.

In a separate announcement, Brøderbund revealed that the original three-year affiliated agreement with Maxis has been extended through February 1993. Under this agreement, Brøderbund handles all sales and distribution of Maxis software, which includes the company's hit titles *SimCity*, *SimEarth* and *SimAnt*.

Atari Ships Deluxe Lynx, Announces Plans for '92

Atari has shipped a deluxe Lynx entertainment package designed to retail for $129.99. The value price includes the Lynx game unit, AC adapter, ComLynx communications cable for multiplayer hookups, carrying pouch and *California Games* cartridge. The company has warned that there will only be a limited number of the specially priced packs available. After they are gone, the Lynx will continue to sell for $99.99 for the base unit, or $149.99 for the full system.

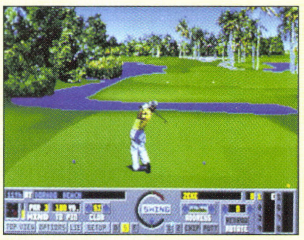
The company has also revealed plans to ship over 60 additional cartridges in 1992, including sports games such as *World Class Soccer*, *Hockey*, *NFL Football*, *Baseball Heroes*, *Malibu Bikini Volleyball* and *Basketbrawl*. Nonsports titles include *Lemmings*, *Shadow of the Beast*, *Dracula* and *Daemonsgate*.





Access LINKS: Windows & MPC

Access Software has unveiled two new versions of its *LINKS The Challenge of Golf* program, to provide top-level golf for Windows users and for Multimedia PC. The Windows version uses separate windows for swinging, scoring and top view, and supports all Windows modes from 640 x 480 16 colors and up. The Multimedia PC *LINKS* takes advantage of the storage capacity of CD-ROM, and adds video and audio data to make the golfing experience even more realistic. Some of the new options include flybys of each hole and tours of the course.



Access also premiered a new championship course disk, *Dorado Beach*, the famous Puerto Rican golf course, and it has indicated that there will be five additional courses introduced during 1992.

Access celebrated the sale of the 100,000th copy of *LINKS* in September 1991, marking the tenth month of the program's life.

Sierra Extends Customer Support Hours

Sierra currently has extended customer service hours for this busy season. The new hours began December 1, 1991, and will be in effect through March 31, 1992. They are: Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Saturday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific Standard Time. The Sierra Hot Line number is (209) 683-8989.

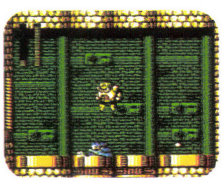
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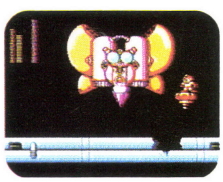
Mega Man 4... Like Nothing Before



Crash the party at Dr. Cossack's citadel.



Toad Man will have you hopping.



Rise to new heights with the Balloon adapter.

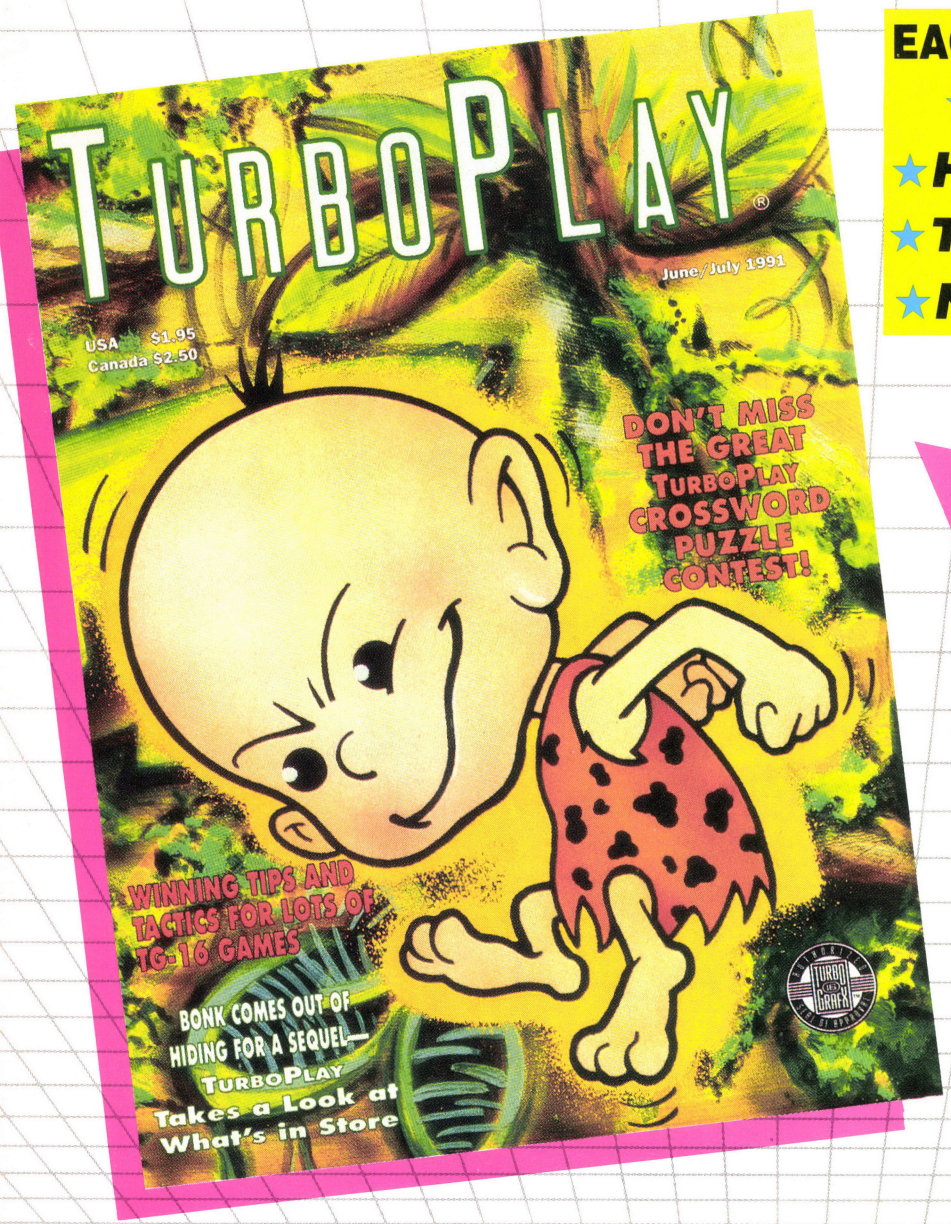
New Enemies like Dr. Cossack. ***"Cruel!"***
New Weapons like the Mega Buster. ***"Devastating!"***
New Robots like Toad Man and Skull Man. ***"Gnarly!"*** Devices like Balloon adapters and Grappling hooks. ***"Handy!"***
Get Mega Man 4—
The rest were just warm-ups. ***"Really!"***

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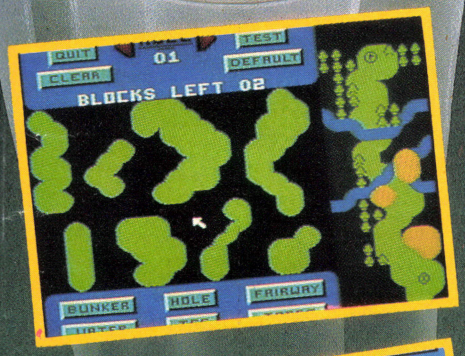
Close your eyes and imagine the perfect golf course. Whether you conjure up an image of a real-life, world famous course or visualize a championship course of your own design – if you can dream it, you can play it with Greg Norman's GOLF POWER. Our exclusive Course Designer with battery back-up allows you to customize your own 18-hole championship course and then save it in memory.

GOLF POWER challenges you with:

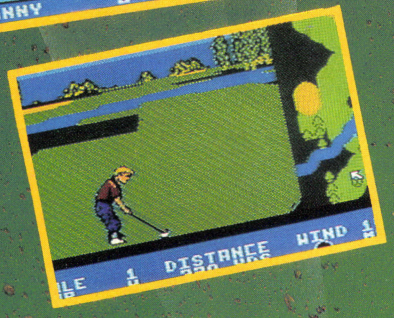
- *Multiple putting and driving ranges*
- *Amateur, Pro-Am, and Professional levels of play*
- *Practice, Matchplay and Strokeplay with single and team play options (up to four players)*
- *On-screen ability to control your swing, for a game that demands more skill than luck.*
- *Changing wind and weather conditions*

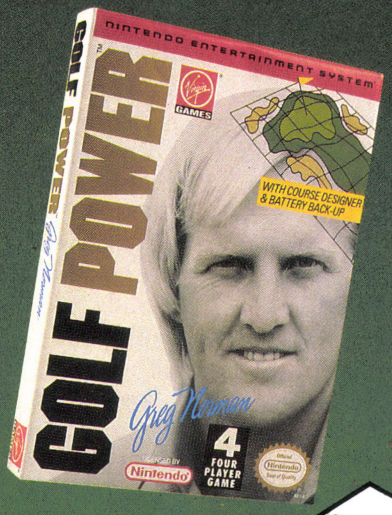
Create a dream course, play one of the pre-set courses in England, Scotland, the USA or Japan, or rejoin a saved game right where you left off.

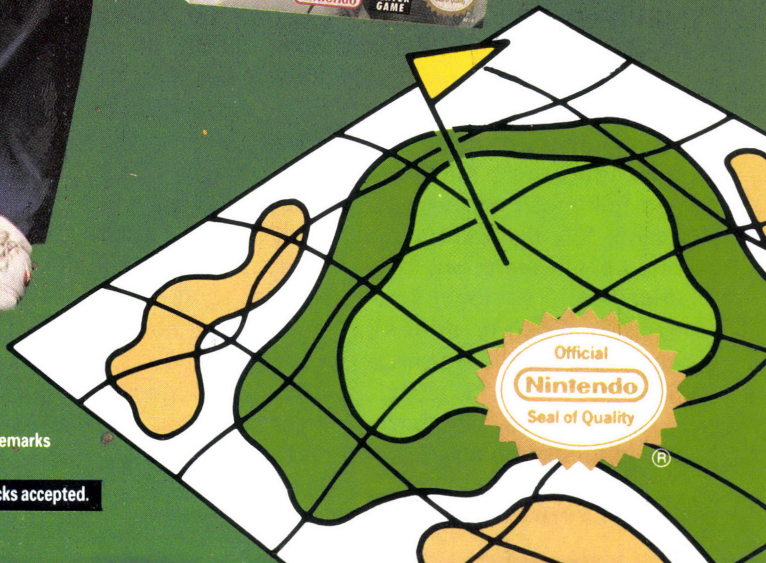
Just like the great White Shark, you'll need total concentration, strategy and control to make the leader board.











COMING SPRING 1992!

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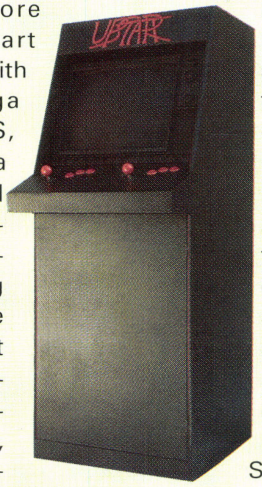
For pricing and orders, please call 800-VRG-IN07. Visa, Mastercard, American Express, and checks accepted.

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continued from page 22

Cabinet Brings Arcade Style Home

Upstart Devices has introduced an arcade-style cabinet for video games that promises to make home play more fun. The Upstart Cabinet works with either the Sega Genesis or NES, and provides a control panel with quality joysticks and buttons that plug into the home system's jacks. It will accommodate a 19- or 20-inch TV monitor, and also provides storage space for the system, peripherals and games. The monitor is held at an upward-tilted angle, similar to the angle of most arcade games.



The laminated particleboard cabinet stands 5'6" and comes with all needed cables and hookups for about $500.

Upstart Devices
P. O. Box 2062
San Jose, CA 95109
(408) 295-9414

Carmen, Living Books Make CD-ROM Debut

Brøderbund introduced two new CD-ROM titles. New for 1992 is the deluxe edition of *Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?* for Multimedia PCs. The game has been expanded for CD-ROM from the original program, and now features traditional and folk music for each location, 130 digitized photos of 60 countries (many produced from National Geographic Society slides), hundreds of new animations and over 3,000 clues.

The company also introduced the first in a series of *Brøderbund Living Books*. These products are early-reading storybooks sparked with extensive sound and animation. The first title in the series is Mercer Mayer's *Just Grandma and Me*. The interactive book stars "Little Critter" and Grandma on a visit to the beach, with interactive animations and a soundtrack that consists of characters that speak, special audio effects and music. The child chooses to hear or play in English, Spanish or Japanese, and uses point-and-click technology to explore the story.

Buyers Guide Packs Games With Book

The latest wrinkle in computer gaming books now includes a book packed with software disks. *Dvorak's Guide to PC Games*, by John C. Dvorak and Peter Spear (Bantam, 416 pages, plus two 5.25-inch disks, $29.95), contains a guide to what's commercially available in games, information on how to get free (shareware) games, hints and tips, and lots of illustrations. Programs on the enclosed disks include seven shareware games and four utilities, including The Boss Key (turns a game screen into a spreadsheet), Digital Lava Lamp (some fancy kaleidoscopic effects for VGA graphics card users), a screen saver and a menu system. There's some learned commentary on hardware, lots of advice and information, and a good rationale if you ever get caught playing games on the boss' time.

Computer Companies Offer Lotto Luck

They don't guarantee you will win, but at least two software manufacturers are betting they can improve your chances. Software that helps would-be lotto winners pick their numbers is available, but let the buyer be aware that there are no promises of a sure thing.

Capstone's *Lotto Gold—The Ultimate Lottery Analysis Program* ($49.95 for the IBM PC) analyzes winning lottery numbers, charts and prints trends, picks and wheels numbers, and manages lottery pools. It comes programmed with winning numbers from 38 state and regional lotteries, then provides methods for analyzing the numbers and making predictions of hot or due numbers, pairs and triples. The analysis techniques are varied, ranging from historical probabilities through numerous other systems, including biorhythms, I Ching numerology and lots more. It accommodates Pick 3 and Pick 4 lotteries, as well as Pick 5, 6 and 7 number games.

Capstone
14202 SW 136th St.
Miami, FL 33186
(305) 252-9040

Entertainment On-Line has two number crunchers. *The Complete Lottery Tracker & Wheeler Version 4.0* ($49.95 for the IBM PC and Macintosh) tracks lotto games, includes analysis capabilities and allows the player to record bets. It comes with an audio tape that provides tips and strategies. *The Daily Number Buster Version 2.0* (IBM PC) claims to be the world's most comprehensive lottery software for three- and four-digit daily number games and daily deal games. It will produce every possible four-number ticket combination, and it can also accommodate boxed bets.

Entertainment On-Line
P.O. Box 553
Westborough, MA 01581
(508) 898-9398

Captain America, Star Trek Hit Arcades

Data East is counting on a lineup of heroes to make its most recent pay-for-play machines into hits. The company's four-player video game, *Captain America and the Avengers*, features Marvel superheroes Captain America, Iron Man, Hawkeye and Vision in battles against such



THE CULTURE BRAIN LINE-UP

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overall	G, W-L, PCT, GB
team W-L	
team batting stats	G, AVG, HR, RBI, BB, SO, SB, ERR
team pitching stats	G, ERA, W-L, SV, BB, SO, HR, R, CG, SHO

Best 30 Individual Stats

AVG	AB	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SAC*	ERR	SB

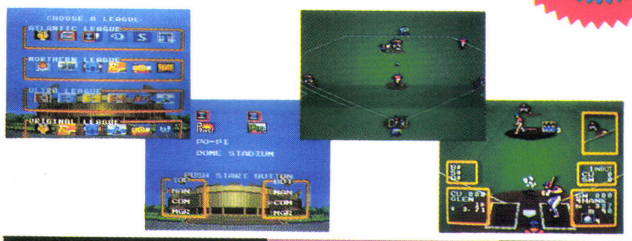
Batting Stats

Pitching Stats

ERA	W	L	SV	CG	SHO	H	HR	R	BB	SO

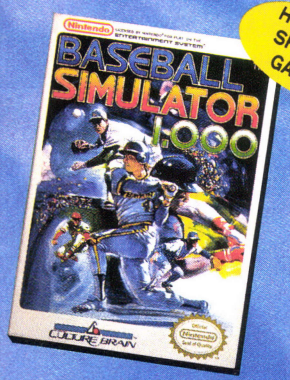
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NUMBER OF PLAYERS	1~6 PLAYERS CAN COMPETE. YOU CAN LET THE COMPUTER PLAY THE GAME TOO.
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STADIUMS	THERE ARE 9 FRANCHISE STADIUMS. YOU CAN ALSO PLAY THE WHOLE SEASON IN ONE STADIUM.
AUTO SETTING	EDIT YOUR ORIGINAL TEAM AND LET THE COMPUTER PLAY.
MANAGER MODE	THE MANAGER CAN SEND SIGNALS TO THE PLAYERS.
FAST PROCESSING	YOU CAN VIEW THE QUICK AUTO GAME RESULT.
EDIT	YOU CAN EDIT THE TEAMS, PITCHERS, AND BATTERS.
FIELDING	YOU CAN CONTROL EACH FIELDER, OR MOVE THEM ALL TOGETHER TO THE RIGHT,LEFT, CLOSE IN, AND FURTHER AWAY.
LEVEL	THERE ARE 3 COMPUTER LEVELS; STANDARD, ADVANCED, AND EXPERT MODES.
CHARACTER OF PITCHERS	EACH PITCHER HAS DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS.
TEAM COLOR	YOU CAN CHOOSE THE COLOR OF THE UNIFORMS AND T-SHIRTS.
ULTRA POINTS	YOU CAN SET THE AMOUNT OF ULTRA POINTS BEFORE PLAY.
DISPLAY	THERE IS OPTION OF ON-SCREEN DISPLAY OF WHICH ULTRA PLAYS YOU CAN USE.
ULTRA PLAYS	39 DIFFERENT ULTRA PLAY ABILITIES.
ERRORS	THERE IS AN OPTION OF WHETHER OR NOT TO HAVE ERRORS DURING PLAYS.





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BASEBALL SIMULATOR 1,000™

THE BEST BASEBALL GAME FOR NES™. IT HAS EXHIBITION, SEASON, EDIT MODE, AND EVEN AN ACTION MODE, TOO!! YOU CAN PLAY IT ANYWAY YOU WANT.

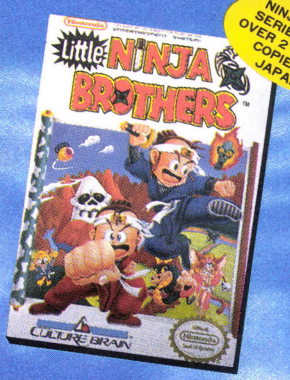
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FLYING WARRIORS TRY TO KEEP THE PEACE IN THE WORLD. THIS GAME EVEN HAS A TOURNAMENT MODE THAT ALLOWS YOU TO PLAY WITH SIX DIFFERENT KINDS OF FIGHTERS. WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING FLYING WARRIORS™ FOR SUPER NES™ NOW.

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villains as Ultron, Mandarin and the Grim Reaper, who make up the team backed by Red Skull. This archvillain has enslaved other super-villains to take over the world through five stages of scrolling action combat.

The company has also introduced the *Star Trek 25th Anniversary Pinball*, which features an interactive "fire photon torpedo" button to shoot flying spaceships and a special effect transporter that beams up the crew. Additionally, the pinball boasts the well-known theme music, as well as speeches by Scotty and Dr. McCoy.

Party Zone Uses Talking Head and Dancing Dummy

Today's pinball machines offer more than just spinning balls and multi-million-point scoring. *Party Zone*, from Bally/Midway, stars a talking head, Captain B. Zarr, as host and D.J., a pop-up Supersonic Robotic Comic and a dancing dummy that jiggles and





bobs during the *Party Zone*'s dance contest.

Designed by Dennis Nordman and Greg Freres (who worked on *Elvira and The Party Monsters* and *Dr. Dude & His Excellent Ray*), the new pin is said to follow the humorous style of *Gilligan's Island*, which ranks as one of this company's all-time best-sellers.

Sound Advice for Computerists

Ad Lib Inc. unveiled an SCSI Adapter Kit for its Ad Lib Gold 1000 sound board, to make it possible for users to add interfacing capabilities for a CD-ROM drive. According to a company spokesman, the piggyback module clips onto the Ad Lib Gold 1000 and does not require a slot. It comes with software, installation program and a flat cable for an internal CD-ROM drive.

Covox has released *The Overlord*, a software product that makes all Covox devices compatible with other sound boards. It contains upgrade programs and device drivers for the company's line of products, and it actually endows some devices with capabilities they didn't have previously. For example, with *The Overlord*, the Covox *Sound Master II* and *Voice Master* products can play back all CMS Sound Blaster digitized sound files. The new device is included free with all Covox products, and present owners can download it free of charge from the Covox BBS; phone (503) 342-4135, or receive it for shipping costs by calling Covox directly.

Walt Disney Computer Software entered an agreement with Phoenix Technology to make Disney sound technology available to over 250 PC manufacturers. The Disney Sound Source will be integrated into the system design of desktop and lap top computers from the companies that license it, either as a circuit schematic, in chip format or as a plug-and-play end-user device.

Tokens Get Fancy, Court Collectors

Tokens, those money-substitute coins used in many play-for-pay palaces, will be fancier and more ornamental. At a recent industry showcase, most of the coin minters revealed plans for super-ornamental tokens that would have special appeal to the players. The object is to attract token collectors to purchase, then save, the coin substitutes.



Nevada Coin Mart has introduced a new product line called the Kaleidocolor. The company applies a coating to the metal token, then adds a clear covering for depth and mixes color shades for the client's special needs. Custom designs further personalize the coins, making them attractive souvenirs.

Top Coin-Ops of October 1991

Figures courtesy of *RePlay* magazine, based on an earnings-opinion poll of operators.

Best Upright Videos

1. *Steel Talons* by Atari
2. *Wrestlefest+* by Technos
3. *Road Riot* by Atari
4. *Race Drivin'* by Atari
5. *Steel Gunner* by Namco
6. *Final Lap 2* by Namco
7. *Hard Drivin'* by Atari
8. *Cisco Heat* by Jaleco
9. *Vendetta+* by Konami
10. *Mad Dog McCree* by Betson/Icat

Best Coin-Op Software

1. *Street Fighter II* by Capcom
2. *Clutch Hitter* by Sega
3. *Super Baseball 2020* by SNK
4. *Crossed Swords* by SNK
5. *Sengoku* by SNK
6. *Burning Fight* by SNK
7. *Raiden* by Fabtek
8. *Final Fight* by Capcom
9. *King of the Monsters* by SNK
10. *Turbo Force* by McO'River

Best New Videos

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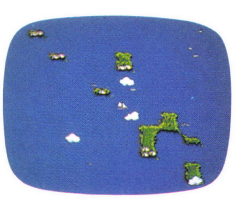
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VGCE 2/92

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Tips are graded on a scale of one to five joysticks. The more joysticks that are colored in, the more valuable the hint.

Blow the dust off those old games, and try out some of our new hints! If you have some great hints and tips for us, just put them on a piece of paper, and send them to VG&CE, 9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Beverly Hills, CA 90210, ATTN: Easter Egg Hunt. The author of each new tip we use will receive $10. Write neatly and be sure to include your name and address!



Here's a key to the abbreviations:

U = Up
D = Down
L = Left
R = Right
A = "A" button
B = "B" button
C = "C" button

CYBERBALL

(SEGA FOR THE GENESIS)

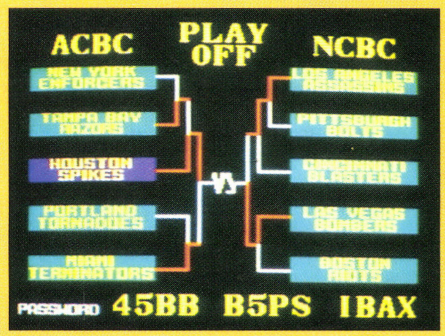
"Equinoxe" and "The Mastering Mishap," both of Los Angeles, California, sent in tons of codes for *CyberBall*.

For *CyberBall*, take the first letter or number and place it in the first blank, with the second letter/number going into the second blank. For example, to play as Atlanta against Boston, the code would read T5BB B5PS IH6X. Thanks, guys, for all the great codes.









CYBER BOWL I with team funds of $999,000:

__5BB B5PS IH__X

Atlanta	T-6 (Boston)
Boston	5-D (Washington)
Chicago	C-P (Boston)
Cleveland	7-U (Boston)
Dallas	L-4 (Boston)
Denver	8-G (Boston)
Detroit	H-7 (Washington)
Indianapolis	K-3 (Boston)
Las Vegas	S-8 (Atlanta)
Los Angeles	6-A (Washington)
Miami	M-J (Boston)
Minnesota	P-E (Washington)
New England	N-R (Washington)
New Orleans	A-9 (Washington)
Philadelphia	G-S (Washington)
Phoenix	9-N (Washington
Pittsburgh	E-5 (Washington)
San Diego	D-F (Boston)
San Francisco	U-H (Boston)
Tampa Bay	R-T (Boston)
Washington	F-C (Boston)

__5BB B5PS IB__X

Buffalo	J-6 (Tampa Bay)
Houston	4-A (Las Vegas)
St. Louis	3-Y (Tampa Bay)

__5BB B5PS IB__I

Cincinnati	2-V (Tampa Bay)
New York	O-B (Las Vegas)
Portland	Z-X (Las Vegas)
Seattle	Y-I (Tampa Bay)

continued on page 34

WANT TO PLAY A GREAT GAME, BOY?

It's your pal, Beetlejuice™, here to bamboozle those bewitchers from the Neitherworld vacationing at lovely Lydia's place. This house is HAUNTED!

Flying cups and saucers and clothes that spring to life cause quite a panic... especially when they're coming for you! It's a horrific 5 level challenge to spook attic ghastlies, rattle angry skeletons and scare ghostly bats. Vampires may even join you for a "bite" to eat. Hmm...maybe we should skip lunch today.

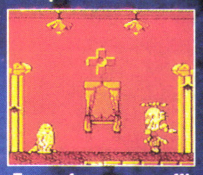
These Neitherworld ghoul-o-ramas are no match for us. Has the "ghost with the most" ever let you down?!!



Graveyard Mix-up!



Neitherworld Pogosnake!



Funny face scare-off!



Check out the "GHOST WITH THE MOST" for your NES™ too!



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CIRCLE #104 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

continued from page 32

NHL Hockey

(ELECTRONIC ARTS FOR THE GENESIS)

FINAL OF BEST OF SEVEN—TWO TEAMMATES (3-0)

KINGS—BRUINS
D444M8HZV86KZZMT

NORTH STARS—BRUINS
BLDWLRNF1XCVOPYH

CANUCKS—PENGUINS
G5GG16PHX7CFNBLW

FINAL OF BEST OF SEVEN—ONE PLAYER (3-0)

KINGS—PENGUINS
H2V6F3Y5Z4ZVHW98

PENGUINS—BLUES
BLHP7M21P76Y29JT

FLAMES—BRUINS
BZDL33G58PG9PTTB

BRUINS—FLAMES
BZD8RK355WFWHH8C

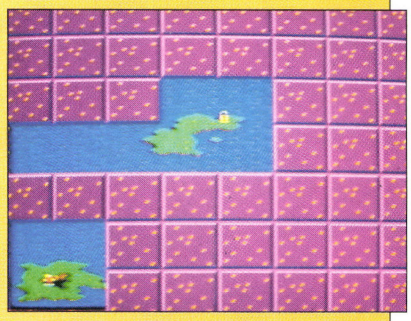
CANADIANS—BLUES
C2BFCW4HSZYC9LD9

Thanks again to "Equinoxe" and "The Mastering Mishap," both of Los Angeles, California.

ToeJam & Earl

(SEGA FOR THE GENESIS)







Justin Beidemen and Chris Matule, both of Barnegat Light, New Jersey, have found a secret level. To reach Level 0, you must first get either the Icarus wings, rocket skates or the inner tube (without using it) and go to Level 1 (the island surrounded by water). Use one of the items to cross the water at the lower-left corner of the map. When you reach an island, pick up both the presents and jump into "space" (the big hole in the middle of the island). Now you should be on Level 0, an island in space with a lemonade stand and a hot tub with a wahine in it. Next, go to the lemonade stand and drink some lemonade to get an extra life. To leave the island, use the "unfall" to go to Level 1, or fall off the edge and you will go to the highest level you have reached during your current game. Thanks, Jason and Chris, for sending in the Easter egg.

Sword of Sodan

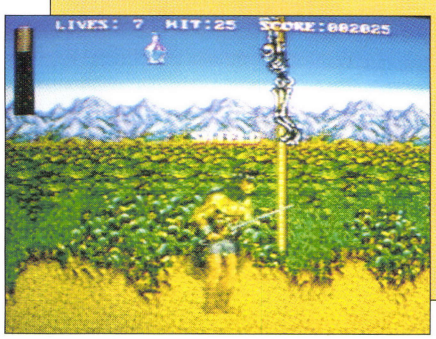
(ELECTRONIC ARTS FOR THE GENESIS)





Stephen Jacobs, of Kansas City, Kansas, sent in a few potion combinations that might come in handy. To gain an extra man, combine the red and purple potions (this works up to Level 3). To warp to the next level, combine four purple potions simultaneously (this works through Zombia Graveyard to the Foyer of Castle Cragganmore). You also can warp in the Foyer by jumping in the third pit.

To walk on lava in the underground passage, combine the blue and purple potions to create a shield.



Timothy Dime, of Niceville, Florida, also sent in some additional combos. Try one orange and one red potion for a Flame Sword, or you can use an orange and purple to get the same thing. One purple, one blue and one orange will give you a "Super Zapp" that will kill everything on the screen. He also included some bad combinations. For instance, don't mix a blue and an orange potion together—it will decrease your health. A red, purple, orange and blue will give you instant death.

Thanks, Stephen and Timothy, for the Easter eggs.

continued on page 36

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SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

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CIRCLE #114 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

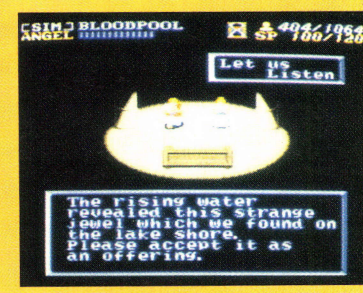
continued from page 34

Actraiser

(ENIX FOR THE SNES)

There are quite a few hidden extra men, better known as Scrolls of Life.





• The first one can be found in Bloodpool. Just make it rain on the lake after you have changed the color back to blue.

• The next one can be found in Kasandora. You'll need to uncover the pyramid and cause an earthquake.







• Once you return to Bloodpool, you'll eventually get the compass, which you can use in several locations. At Fillmore, you'll find a Scroll of Life in the ocean.





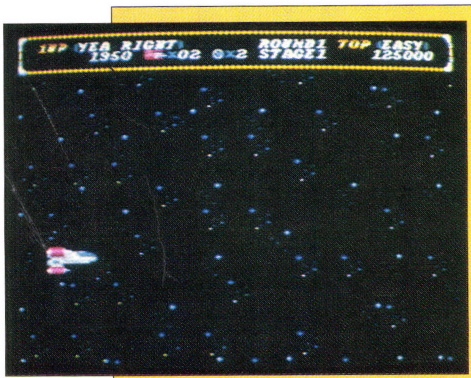


• The last extra man can be found in Northwall. After you're told a large tree has been found with initials on it, send a bolt of lightning onto the shrine.



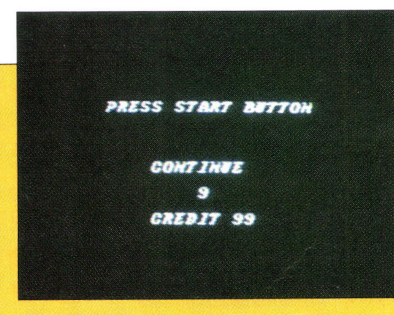






Hellfire

(SEISMIC FOR THE GENESIS)



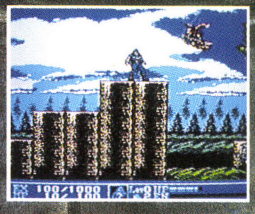
Javan Bradshaw, of Scarborough, Ontario, Canada, has sent in a way to get an extra-hard mode. Go to the option screen and put the difficulty on "Hard," then wait a few minutes. The difficulty should read "Yeah, right," and the game will automatically start with 99 continues. Thanks, Javan, for the Easter egg.

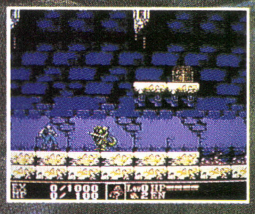
Get in the Groove and Bust a Move

Discover Hidden Rooms and Secret Passageways

Grab Dozens of Items to Put in Your Bag of Tricks





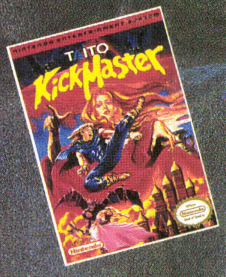


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CRUNCH TIME!

KickMaster™



Smash! Crack! Pow! Whap! Crunch! Uugghhh! Take that you feeble grunts! Who are you? Are you one of Belzed's punks? Well then, how would you like to join my fight against that evil sorcerer and help me rescue Princess Silphee? You look like a brave dude. But, can you get 'rad'? If not, Belzed will make you his personal dart board.

You'll have to learn how to master the radical moves of an accomplished Kickmaster, like myself. Knee drops, roundhouse kicks, double butterfly kicks and the lethal blazing flip kick, will be necessary to battle this brute. The quicker you learn, the better. Capture special items to increase your magical capabilities too. Magic can get you out of some tight situations. Make no mistake though, superior agility and bruising hand-to-hand combat are your most lethal weapons. Well, school is in session kid. Start learning those moves and get cracking, crunching, and kicking. You've gotta watch your own back now. Hasta la vista, dude!

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CIRCLE #115 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

VIDEO GAME REVIEWS

The Empire Strikes Back

JVC/LUCASFILM

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10

It took George Lucas and company three years to deliver a sequel to *Star Wars*, one of the most popular motion pictures of all time. Surprisingly, the sequel to the *Star Wars* NES game is already here, just a few months after the release of the original.

If you read Mike Davila's preview in the October 1991 issue of VG&CE, you should have a good idea of what you can expect from this intergalactic adventure. From the ice world of Hoth to the Cloud City on the planet Bespin, the game alternates between scrolling run-and-jump sequences and shoot-'em-up scenarios, with Luke at the controls of a rebel snowspeeder or his famous X-wing fighter.

One of the most positive things I can say about *The Empire Strikes Back* is that it really takes advantage of the film as source material. How many times have you seen a licensed game that didn't attempt much more than a token stab at the plot of the movie, book or TV show that it was supposed to have been based on? Lucasfilm and Sculptured Software have been quite successful in making the game mirror the film as closely as possible.

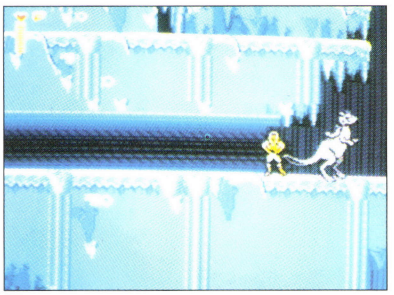
In fact, if this had been an original piece of software—a brand-new NES game about a guy named Luke Skywalker whom I had never heard of before—I'd surely be raving and drooling over the unique story line and characters that *Star Wars* fans will undoubtedly take for granted. That doesn't mean that you have to be familiar with the movie(s) in order to enjoy the game, but it is a big kick to see the details that have been plucked from the film and reproduced in an interactive environment—one that really should have the ability to make you feel like you're a part of the *Star Wars* saga.

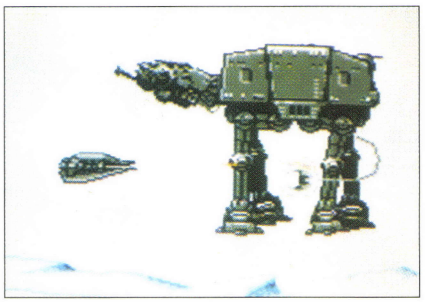
Unfortunately, the game is not without flaws, the most painful of which is a quirky control scheme that tends to undermine the "suspension of disbelief" that would draw you into the character of Luke. For one thing, many of the game's characters move far too abruptly to convey enough of a sense of weight or gravity—and certain "force powers" allow Luke to jump and scurry around at an even more incredible clip.

Secondly—and this one put a serious damper on my enjoyment of *The Empire Strikes Back*, folks—the program's constant, impatient attempts to center Luke on the screen mean that the background elements in most of the game's sequences are never really where you want them when you want them there. Let's say you're trying to get the young Jedi to jump on top of an ice block—a required maneuver throughout the first level of play. You hit the "jump" button and tap the control pad to the right. Luke, always eager to oblige, leaps up and to the right—and the background shifts violently to the *left*, which causes our hero to miss the block entirely and land on the other side of it.

If you have enough patience to learn how to compensate for the hit-or-miss controls, you'll be handsomely rewarded by the game's rich graphics and evocative soundtrack. The character animation is very detailed and smooth, and the digitized photos in the pop-up information windows are extremely well-done. Similarly, the music draws liberally from John Williams' memorable movie score—just check out the game's introduction, a nearly note-perfect clone of the film's opening sequence. There are some mind-blowing sound effects, too, most notably when Luke's X-wing crash lands on Dagobah with chirping alien birds and squawking swamp creatures all around.

My hat is off to the developers of *The Empire Strikes Back*. It's









***The Empire Strikes Back*, by JVC/Lucasfilm, takes advantage of the film as a source of material.**

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CIRCLE #116 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

obvious that a lot of time and effort were put into this cartridge, and, as a kind of electronic autograph, there's a spot in the game where you can get digitized faces of some of the designers to appear. I'm looking forward to the third game in the trilogy. If they can keep it free of problems like the ones I've mentioned here, it's bound to be an instant classic.

—Chris Bieniek

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Lemmings

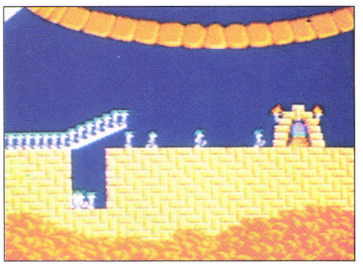
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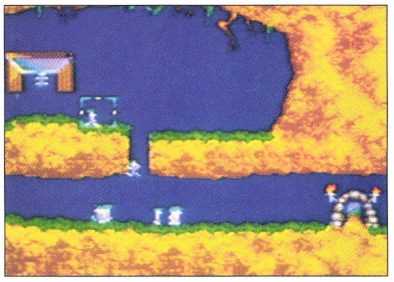
For the Super NES ($59.95)

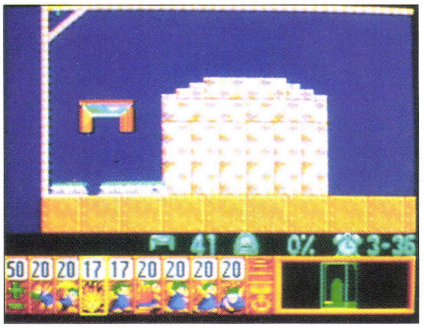
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10

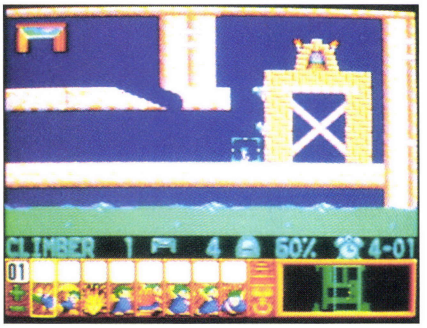
What has green hair, two legs and squeaks, splatters and explodes? Why, lemmings, of course, the lovable stars of Sunsoft's latest release for the Super NES, called, aptly enough, *Lemmings*. Like their real-world counterparts, these electronic lemmings have a penchant for blundering blindly into danger. It's up to you to keep them out of trouble.

Lemmings are about as clever as lobotomized monkeys. At the start of each level, the tiny critters stream from the entrance and march, in a long line, in the direction of the exit. They care little for the dangers that lie between them and their goal. They'll gladly walk to their deaths. Luckily, while they have no desire to save themselves, they'll do whatever you tell them. By assigning tasks to individual lemmings, you can keep the rest out of difficulty.











As the makers of *Lemmings* warn, once you get started with the game, you'll have a hard time tearing yourself away.

There are eight jobs you can assign to a lemming: climbing, floating, bombing, blocking, building, bashing, mining and digging. A climber can ascend the side of vertical obstacles, while diggers can dig down through floors and bashers can punch horizontally through some types of walls. Blockers, on the other hand, force other lemmings to turn and walk the other way, and floaters can fall long distances, slowing their descent with an umbrella, à la Mary Poppins. Bombers explode five seconds after they're set, blowing apart whatever they're standing near; miners dig down at an angle; and builders assemble bridges out of square blocks. By assigning the right job to the right lemming at the right time, you can guide the feebleminded creatures to the exit and so save the day (not to mention move on to the next level).

To ensure the task isn't too easily accomplished, you are given only a certain number of lemmings for each job assignment. In one level, for example, you may be allowed to use only ten blockers and ten diggers in order to get the job done. In other levels, you may be given 20 of each job assignment, leaving it up to you to figure out which combination will keep the lemmings from obliteration.

Initially, the task is easy. Because the beginning levels provide clues that guide you to the right solution, you can usually save the required number of lemmings on your first try. However, as the levels progress, so does the difficulty. Before long, you'll have to assign several different jobs almost simultaneously, frantically selecting job buttons and assigning them to the appropriate lemmings, all the while trying to keep the rest from doing something stupid. You'll scratch your head in bewilderment as you watch the poor victims of your confusion walk into rotating blades, fall off cliffs, drown and otherwise take their own hapless lives. (Oh, the guilt!)

As gruesome as the lemmings' fate may sound, the game is really quite charming. A lemming about to explode, for example, slaps his hands (paws?) to the side of his head and squeaks "Oh, no!" before popping into hundreds of little pieces. In fact, watching the little guys destroy themselves is so much fun, you may be tempted to guide them—not to safety—but to their demise. Especially entertaining is triggering the Nuke

continued on page 45

R U A GENESIS GENIUS?

PART 3

You're brilliant, right? NOT!
Take the Genesis Aptitude Test (G.A.T.) and let's find out what you really know. Write the answers to questions 15–21* on your completed entry form, and send it in. You could score 3 new Genesis titles from Electronic Arts just for being a wiz.

And if the G.A.T. didn't hurt your head, flex your brain on the tougher questions in the PRO BOX. Write your answers to questions 1–4 on the separate entry form and you could win a trip to Electronic Arts to Play with the Pros.

*If you didn't answer G.A.T. questions 1–14—no problem. It's never too late to become a Genius!

G.A.T. QUESTION #15

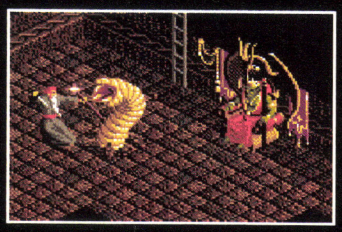


Q:

F-22 IS:

A. The number on Adolf Schicklgruber's dog tags.
B. The best song on the jukebox at Floyd's Diner and Aquarium.
C. BINGO!
D. The first real jet flight simulator for the Genesis.
E. A very peculiar bra size.

G.A.T. QUESTION #16



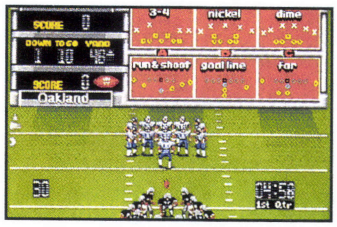
Q:

WHAT'S ONE OF THE WORST WAYS TO DIE WHILE PLAYING THE IMMORTAL™ ?

A. Get tied down by escaped lab rats and whipped with spaghetti (al dente).
B. Ask a flesh-eating sloth to dance.
C. Be served as the main course for a billion baby arachnids.
D. Get pummeled with various vegetables and fruit.
E. Call your Mom in to watch a gruesome ogre death.



G.A.T. QUESTION #17



Q:

IN JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL™ '92, THE NEW RUN & SHOOT OFFENSE IS:

A. Essential in tough neighborhoods.
B. A good way to exploit a suffocating 3-4 defense.
C. Guaranteed to get you 5 to 10 at San Quentin.
D. Dangerous if opposing players have bazookas.
E. Better than Run & Fall Down.



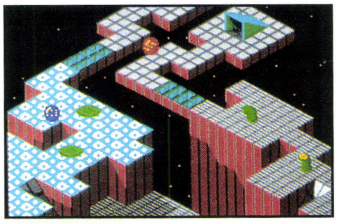
G.A.T. QUESTION #18



IN SHADOW OF THE BEAST™, YOU MUST FIGHT EVERYTHING BUT:

A. Giant insects.
B. Giant eyeballs.
C. Giant bats.
D. Giant boulders.
E. Small, slow-witted bosses from another kind of game machine.

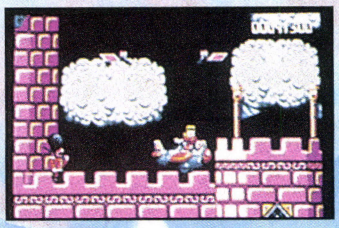
G.A.T. QUESTION #19



WHAT IS MARBLE MADNESS™?

A. The hottest band in thrash-punk.
B. A side-effect of the chicken pox.
C. A brain condition affecting the temporal lobe.
D. Piloting your marble through mind-boggling mazes despite cliffs, rubber walls, vacuums, and slime pits.
E. The favorite in the third race at Aqueduct.

G.A.T. QUESTION #20



WHAT DOES ROBOCOD™, THE SUPER SOPHISTICATED SECRET AGENT, USE TO FLY?

A. An Acme rocket sled.
B. His flying-fish feathers.
C. A seaweed chariot pulled by aerodynamic guppies.
D. His bathtub.
E. A winged Aston-Marlin.

G.A.T. QUESTION #21



THE BEST WEAPONS IN BUCK ROGERS™: COUNTDOWN TO DOOMSDAY ARE:

A. A busted atomic clock and a dollar bill.
B. Needle gun and laser rifle.
C. The acrobat and bribery skills.
D. The chirping of Martian tree frogs.
E. Who cares? If you get dusted, just revive from battery back up.

CIRCLE #122 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

PRO BOX

PRO BOX QUESTION #1

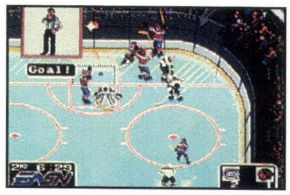


Q:

IN STARFLIGHT™, THE _____ IS THE ONLY ALIEN RACE THAT EATS HEADFRUIT.



PRO BOX QUESTION #2



Q:

IN NHL® HOCKEY, WHAT DOES THE SCREEN SAY WHEN THE SAN JOSE SHARKS™ WIN THE STANLEY CUP®?



PRO BOX QUESTION #3



Q:

IN ROAD RASH™, WHICH RASHER APPEARS IN EVERY RACE?

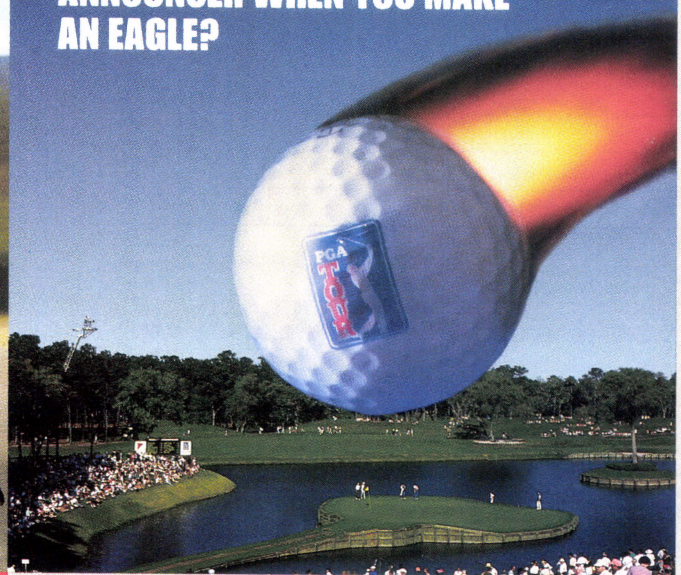


PRO BOX QUESTION #4



Q:

IN PGA TOUR® GOLF, WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU RECEIVE FROM THE ANNOUNCER WHEN YOU MAKE AN EAGLE?



PRO BOX

PRACTICE IS OVER. PLAY WITH THE PROS FROM ELECTRONIC ARTS.

ANSWERS TO G.A.T. QUIZ PART 2:

#8 D #9 E #10 B #11 A #12 D #13 A #14 C

WATCH FOR G.A.T. QUIZ PART 4

for the answers to G.A.T. Quiz Part 3.



BE A GENESIS QUIZ WIZ:

Just fill out this G.A.T. quiz and mail it. Entries with 100% correct answers qualify for a drawing to win any 3 Genesis games from Electronic Arts, including these hot soon-to-be-released titles:

WHERE IN TIME IS CARMEN SANDIEGO?® —Carmen and her gang travel through time to steal treasures from the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Imperial Japan and even the Present. Pursue the villains to their hideaways before time runs out.

JORDAN VS BIRD™ —Michael Jordan competes against Larry Bird in the ultimate basketball match up! Compete in three different events: One on One, Slam Dunk Competition, and 3-Point Shootout.

BLACK CRYPT™ —Battle the minions of Estoroth through a foresaken land and attack his dungeon stronghold. Innovative interface and real-time monster combat enliven the world of Black Crypt.

Your Answers

#15_____ #16_____ #17_____ #18_____ #19_____ #20_____ #21_____

Name _____

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

( ) Phone _____ Age _____

SEND COMPLETED G.A.T. QUIZ TO:

G.A.T. QUIZ, ELECTRONIC ARTS, 1450 FASHION ISLAND BLVD., SAN MATEO, CA 94404

Entry must be postmarked by 3/31/91, drawing will be held 4/17/92. Winner will be contacted by mail.

_____ I would like to be a Genesis game advisor to Electronic Arts. Give me a call sometime.

For answers to G.A.T. Part 3, call the Electronic Arts Hints Hotline 1-900-288 HINT. 95 cents for the first minute, 75 cents for each minute thereafter. Be sure to get your parent's permission to use the Hotline if you are under 18 years of age. Messages subject to change without notice.

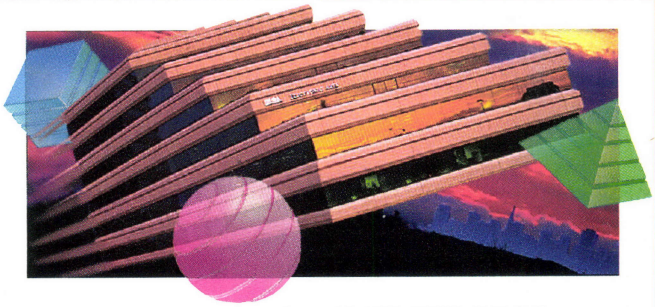
ELECTRONIC ARTS HINTS HOTLINE - 1-900-288-HINT - ELECTRONIC ARTS HINTS HOTLINE

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ELECTRONIC ARTS®

CIRCLE #117 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

PRO BOX



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Win a roundtrip, all-expense-paid trip to Electronic Arts corporate headquarters in San Mateo, California! Spend the day playing with the EA Pros; find out how games are made; be an EA game consultant; and receive other great prizes.

Fill out the PRO BOX quiz, and send it to the address below.

You'll be automatically entered into the contest. No purchase required.

Your Answers

#1_____ #2_____

#3_____ #4_____

Name _____

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

( ) Phone _____ Age _____

SEND COMPLETED PRO BOX QUIZ TO:

PRO BOX QUIZ, ELECTRONIC ARTS, 1450 FASHION ISLAND BLVD. SAN MATEO, CA 94404

One entry per person. All entries must be postmarked no later than March 31, 1992. Winner will be drawn on April 17, 1992 and notified by mail. Electronic Arts will arrange transportation and accommodations for the grand prize winner and a parent or guardian if the winner is under the age of 18. Some restrictions apply. This contest is not available to employees of EA, its affiliates, and their family members. Not valid outside the U.S. or where prohibited by law.

ELECTRONIC ARTS®

PRO BOX

PRO BOX

PRO BOX

continued from page 40

function, which blasts all the lemmings on the screen into a huge fireworks display of body fragments, sans gore.

As the makers of the game warn, once you get started with *Lemmings*, you'll have a hard time tearing yourself away. This game is as addictive as potato chips and clam dip.

—Clayton Walnum

Sunsoft
11165 Knott Ave.
Cypress, CA 90630
(714) 891-4500

Galaxy Force II

SEGA

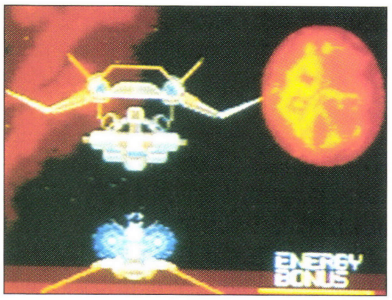
For the Sega Genesis ($59.95)

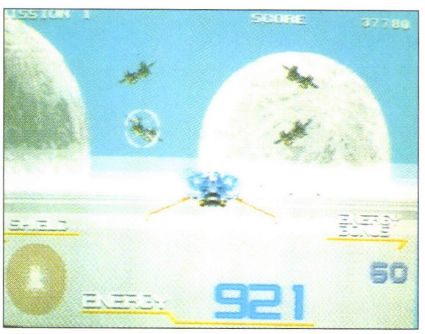
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10

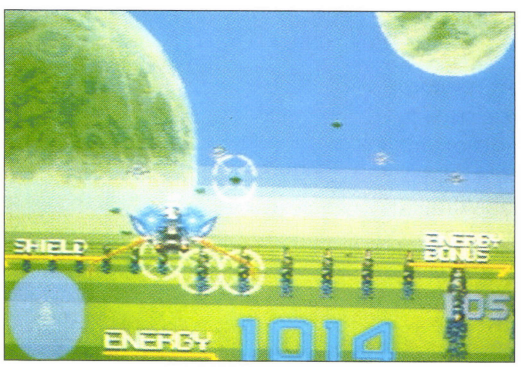
There's nothing quite like the feeling you get from strapping yourself into a freewheeling, go-for-broke sci-fi shooter and just blasting away at those alien scum. Unfortunately, *Galaxy Force II* (sequel to the Sega Master System game) isn't quite like that feeling, either. While the game has intense graphic splash, its play gets old quickly.

GFII is a series of missions that take you from outer space to the inner cores of death-star-like installations. Your point-of-view is just behind the craft. There are three stages to each of the five missions (you can begin with any of them): the approach, the tunnels and the battle with the central core. (Sometimes the three stages repeat within a mission.) You've got two offensive weapons: a gun, which aims with the nose of your ship, and a limited supply of homing missiles. You've got a shield that is quickly depleted—I could find no way to restore it—and a limited fuel supply. You're occasionally offered a chance to refuel by docking with a supply ship. If you run out of fuel, you've had it: game over, no continues. The same goes for running out of shield strength. You can take a few more hits after your shield goes, then it's lights out for all good space jockeys.

The approaches take place in space or over the surface of a planet, *Space Harrier*-style. Hazards by the hundreds are thrown your way: enemy ships, asteroids, debris, banks of missiles, fire storms, ice crystals—you name it. Some must be dodged; others can be blasted away. Often, huge contingents of enemies will fly in your face, but if you can maneuver quickly enough to lock on, a single button press will result in a handful of missiles taking out a whole fleet of ships at once. It's real gee-whiz stuff, a bit like the fast and furious combat in *Afterburner II*, but much more spectacular.











The tunnels are disappointing, not because they're easy (they're not), but because there's so little detail. Don't look for hardware lining the walls, as in a death star trench. There are only four featureless walls with alternating bands of color; except for the enemies that pop up from the ground, there's nothing that differentiates one from another. You'll need to do some really fancy flying through these tunnels, since they change shape, twist and turn, and become narrower and shorter. The scrolling is very smooth and the effect is good, but I expected more.

When you reach the Central Command Center of each mission, you're in for another disappointment. This is the simplest "boss" I've ever seen. You blast away at the center of a sphere that doesn't shoot back. All you're required to do is blow it up before it hits you. Hardly thrilling.

Good points: excellent graphics, especially planet backgrounds, multilevel effects with asteroids and debris, and lots of large, smoothly scaling objects. Decent sound and music, but the voice that calls out "Right turn!" or "Left turn!" in the tunnels is scratchy. Bad points: some flickering when there are large enemies on screen, lack of detail in the tunnels, lack of challenge with the Command Centers and repetitive game play. Lastly, all the great graphics take a big toll on length. Devoted game players will be able to finish this one the same day they take it home.

Check out *GFII* if you can. It's definitely worth playing, if only to be impressed with the light show; but, unless you live and die for graphics (as many of us do), you probably won't die over this one.

—Josh Mandel

Sega of America
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Redwood City, CA 94065
(415) 508-2800

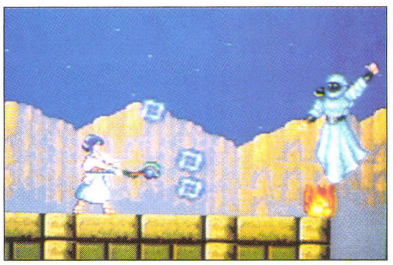
Valis III

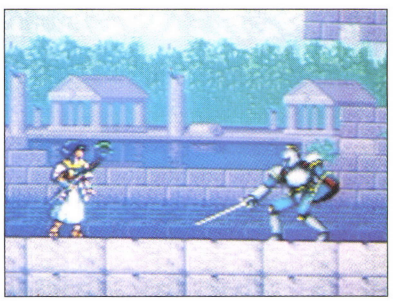
NEC

For the TurboGrafx-16 ($61.99)

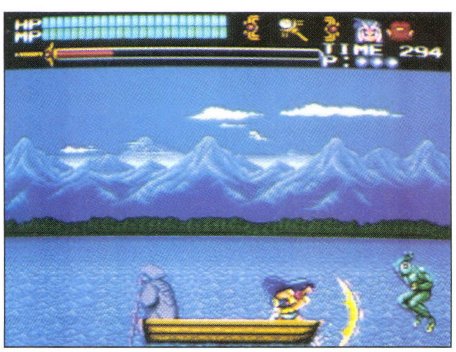
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

Valis III is an action/adventure title that should appeal to that genre's gamers.











A new evil has risen and cast a dark shadow over the peaceful land of Vecanti. This shadow belongs to Glamess, the Emperor of the Spirit World, and he wants to add the land of Vecanti, as well as the rest of the world, to his collection of conquered worlds.

In this new saga of good versus evil, Yuko, the heroine of the previous two episodes, has some help. It comes in the form of Vernal, Yuko's twin sister, who just happens to be the Princess of Vecanti, and Cham, whose father was killed by the evil Glamess. Will the valiant trio be able to save the world?

In *Valis III*, you'll control one of the these characters through the various levels in an attempt to defeat Glamess and save the world. Each character has a different weapon that's best in different circumstances. Yuko can fire a shock wave type of weapon (you'll be familiar with this from *Valis II*), which has medium range and power. Cham uses a whip that has shorter range but is more powerful. Vernal has the ability to fire straight ahead and diagonally at the same time. Along with the in-hand weapons, there are other magics that can be obtained throughout the game. The blue wand, for instance, lets you freeze the enemies in their tracks so you can either jump on top of them to get across a gap or destroy them before they do any damage. The red wand, on the other hand, blasts all the enemies from the screen in smart-bomb fashion. Even though the magics are the same, they appear and can be used differently for each of the three characters. To Yuko, for example, the blue wand appears as a blue wave that freezes the enemies, while, for Vernal, it appears as small projectiles that seek out enemies as they appear on screen. Obviously, this doesn't take any timing and can be used when the enemies are out of range.

Graphically, the game is done very well. With the use of the CD as a storage medium, the background and foreground have excellent color and detail. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for the game's sound and music. The sound of the weapons and enemies being killed seems very primitive and barren, compared to other similar games. The music is also plain and not as catchy as you'd hope from a CD-based game. The animation of the characters and enemies, however, is very good. Their movement across the screen seems to have nice, fluid motion, as opposed to quick, choppy jerks.

The game offers somewhat of a challenge as you decide which character's magic abilities and weapon(s) will best help you through certain sections. This will keep most gamers happy. Also, since you do have three characters to choose from, you can play through the game three times, changing the "main" character you use, which does alter the strategy a bit. If you're into action/adventure games, you should get your money's worth out of *Valis III*.

—Donn Nauert

NEC Technologies
1255 Michael Drive
Wood Dale, IL 60191
(708) 860-9500

Super Earth Defense Force

JALECO

For the Super NES ($59.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10

Will Nintendo and its licensees paint themselves into a corner by prefixing every SNES title with the word "Super"? What happens when the successor to the SNES comes along? Will we have *Super-Duper Earth Defense Force*? Wait and see! Till then, we'll just have to make do with regular *Super Earth Defense Force*, which isn't such a horrible fate. In fact, *SEDF* is tremendously arcadelike and is in almost every way state-of-the-art.

There's no avoiding the fact that this is obviously just another scrolling shooter, like hundreds of others. You pilot a spacecraft through a series of increasingly difficult levels, and the scenery scrolls from right to left as you go. You pick a weapon from a menu of eight at the beginning of each level, and your overall strength increases each time you obtain a certain amount of experience. Each game gives you only one life, but you have

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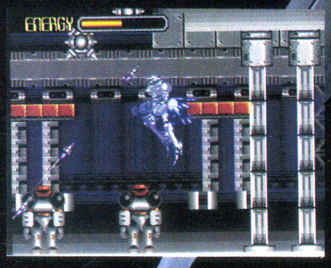
SEGA GENESIS
16-BIT CARTRIDGE

HEAVY NOVA™

©MICRONET 1991

8 MEGA-BIT MEMORY





The "Heavy Dolls" are the toughest troop in Earth's Armed Forces. Guide your robot through the training camp of these elite fighthing cyborgs.

There is only one objective——
to gain the "Heavy Nova" title which is only given to the deadliest warrior in the universe.
Can you defeat all challengers to become the Heavy Nova?

AVAILABLE NOW!

Amazingly Exciting!

OFFICIAL SEGA SEAL OF QUALITY

Can you become the "Heavy Nova", the strongest fighter in this whole universe?

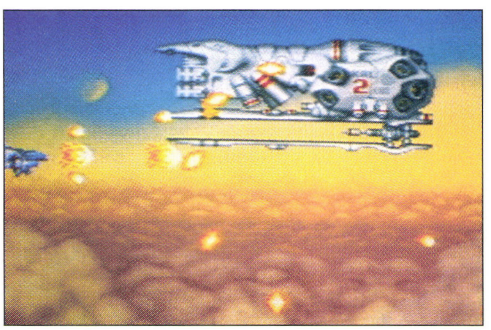
CIRCLE #128 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

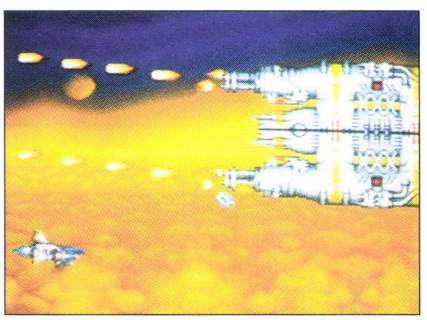
shields that allow you to take four hits, and you get numerous continues. And your sparkling new spaceship comes complete with a couple of deelyboppers that orbit your craft for additional firepower.

The game is excellently balanced. The levels get just enough harder to tantalize you into thinking you'll make some progress. The assortment of weapons is great, and choosing the best weapon for each level is a complex exercise. There are loads of enemy types, interesting to look at and with identifiable attack patterns, making for good strategic play. Moreover, it's one of those games that leaves your friends gasping in amazement that you could survive for more than a few seconds; some of the screens crawl with activity. In a nutshell, this game has most of the best characteristics of scrolling shooters.









SEDF is graphically one of the most elaborate, on a level with *Musha* and *ThunderForce III*. Some of the bullet sprays, for instance, are incredible waves and patterns. Multiplane scrolling is used abundantly for 3-D effects, and some levels are transparent, making for very intricate effects. Use of color is superb; the sun sets very gradually, with subtle shifts in shades, fade-ins and fade-outs are perfect, and many of the backgrounds and screens that aren't even animated are just beautifully painted. Smooth scaling is also used, particularly with an immense space station that drifts closer and closer, very slowly, getting more and more detailed, until you're on a level with it and can engage it in combat.

The music is pretty good, but the sound effects are excellent—real fireworks-display quality. There's no voice synthesis, however.

The flies in the ointment: The game suffers terribly from slowdowns. They're infrequent on the first level, but, as you get up into the higher levels, they're almost continuous. In fact, every scene where you battle the boss monster at the end of a level is severely crippled by slowdowns—and, of course, these slowdowns come during the most exciting and challenging parts of the game. The side advantage to this is that you end up playing better than you normally would if the game were running at a constant speed. But you can't develop a rhythm—that spooky little mind-set you get into when you seem to be in perfect sync with the game. Whether or not these slowdowns are annoying enough to ruin the game for you is a matter of individual taste. I found that it significantly spoiled an otherwise very impressive game. The additional fly: There aren't enough levels to this game, which is a common flaw with games that put so much stock in good graphics.

—J.M.

Super Earth Defense Force is graphically one of the most elaborate games, on a level with *Musha* and *ThunderForce III*.

Jaleco USA
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Star Trek

ULTRA
For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($54.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	**10**
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10

"Space...the final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship *Enterprise*." How many times have we heard those immortal words? For most of us, countless.

Usually, when writing a review, the hardest part is coming up with the first few opening words—at least, for me it is. This time I was lucky to have a game in which there are no words more fitting to symbolize its theme.

Ultra's latest NES endeavor also comes to us at the best possible moment, just when the sixth *Star Trek* motion picture has been released. Fans of both the old and new series, too, will have much to look forward to when they purchase this NES title.

Star Trek is based on the original series that aired in the late 1960s, with the game's opening title screen and introduction taken straight from the series: the *Enterprise* orbiting a planet, warping by, while the *Star Trek* theme song plays. Die-hard trekkers, such as myself, are bound to get a kick out of this. The only thing missing is William Shatner's voice to recite the intro. The entire original crew is also used: Spock, Dr. McCoy, Scotty, Uhura—they're all here.

The game's plot is fairy simple, but it tries to rely on the gamer's knowledge of the television series. Here's the scoop: While investigating a magnetic disturbance near the planet Iotia (Anybody remember

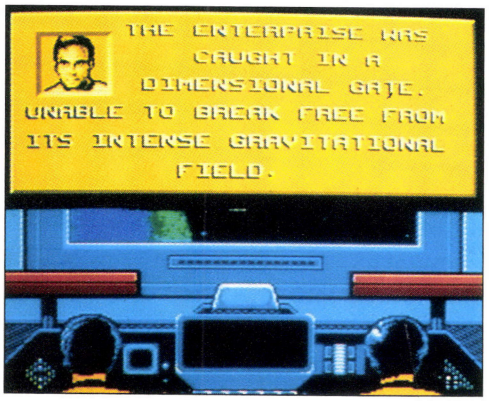
what episode this planet was in?), the *Enterprise* is thrown through a mysterious "hole," or rip, in space, leaving her and her crew in the heart of uncharted space with damaged dilithium crystals. Your objective is to replenish the *Enterprise*'s dilithium, get her back to federation space and close the interdimensional hole before it destroys the entire galaxy. Like I said—simple!

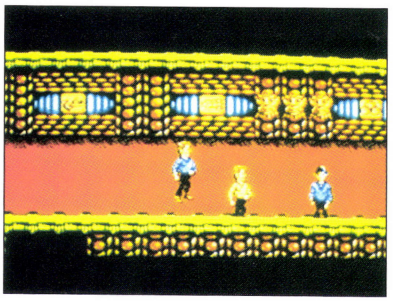
There are two different gaming scenarios that are used throughout *Star Trek*. In the first, while on the *Enterprise*, the player, as Captain James T. Kirk, sits in his captain's chair, issues orders to his crew (red alert, communications, set course, etc.) and can inquire as to the status of a station. Kirk can also select a landing party, consisting of three members, to be beamed down to the surface of the planet. He has a choice of Spock, McCoy, a specialist officer from one of three departments or a security officer.

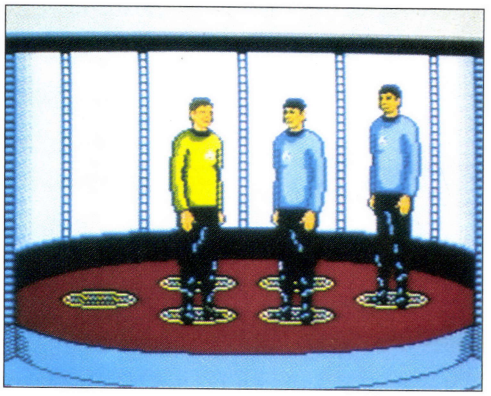
The second game scenario takes place when the landing party beams down to the planet's surface. Here, Kirk and the two other party members must search about the planet, look for clues, talk with the inhabitants and avoid a variety of obstacles and hazards that can injure landing-party members. If all of the landing party is gravely injured or if only Kirk is, the crew members are automatically beamed back to the ship and the player must start the planetary phase over again. Yes, the game does have a password save option so you can lock in your progress along the way.

After you complete your task for a given planet, you beam back to the *Enterprise*, move on to your next planetary destination and continue until your mission is complete. There are no encounters with Klingons, but you do come across Romulans, since you must cross their territory in order to make it home. Diplomatic tact might be wise, instead of dueling it out when you do come across them.

I'll have to admit, the programmers of *Star Trek* paid enormous attention to the show's minutiae: The spore-shooting plants; the green, Orion slave girl; Harry Mudd; the Gorn and his slither speech; and the bridge of the *Enterprise* are all





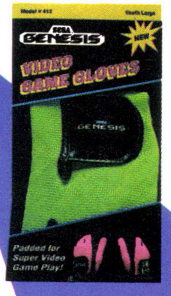


Ultra's *Star Trek* is based on the television series that aired in the late 1960s.

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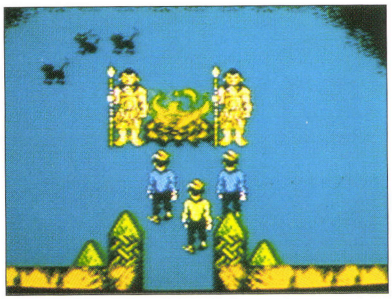
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here in astounding detail. The graphics are as good as they get for the NES.

The musical scores and sound effects are also straight from the television series. For each situation, a musical score will play, according to the tone (dangerous, easy-going, uncertain, etc.) of the environment.

True, *Star Trek* isn't without imperfection; the game seems way too easy to solve. It took me about six hours of solid game play to complete the entire game, from start to finish.

Overall, *Star Trek*'s pluses outweigh its insignificant minuses. If you're a *Trek* fan—or even if you're not—you'll want to add this to your NES collection. Kudos to the programmers and designers for a job well done! And, by the way, what does Led Zeppelin have to do with *Trek*?

—Mike Davila

Ultra Software
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James Pond II—Codename: Robocod

ELECTRONIC ARTS

For the Sega Genesis ($49.95)

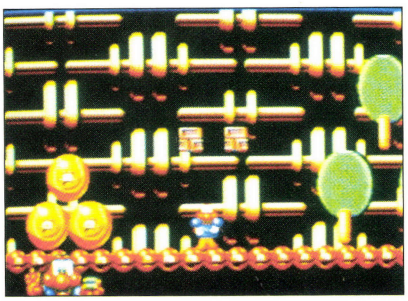
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

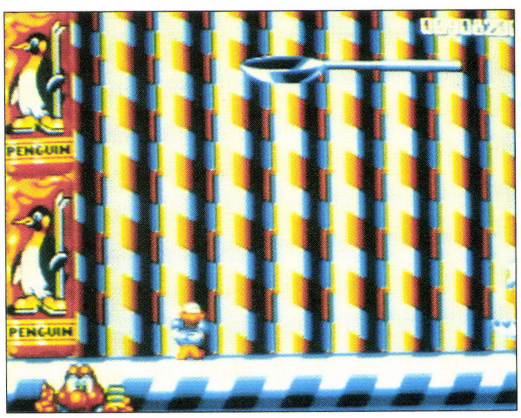
Chris Sorrell is one guy I'd like to meet. After designing graphics for various Atari ST and Amiga titles in his native England, Chris masterminded last year's *James Pond* game for the Genesis. Apparently, the latter was successful enough to warrant the release of this sequel, formally titled *James Pond II—Codename: Robocod*. Once again, Sorrell is being credited as the artist most responsible for the game's design, code and artwork. Not a bad resumé for a fellow who's not even old enough to buy liquor in most of the United States!

With a tip of the hat to Hudson Soft's shamefully underappreciated *Milon's Secret Castle, Codename: Robocod* finds our hero lurking around outside Santa Claus' toy factory at the North Pole. Inside his life-sustaining mechanical Robosuit, Pond must climb up the outside walls of the factory and explore St. Nick's digs, one room at a time. Once inside, he'll have to find and dismantle dozens of "penguin bombs" that have been planted by the sinister Dr. Maybe.

If this sounds to you like it's shaping up to be a *Sonic the Hedgehog* clone, you're half right. Though not blatantly derivative of Sega's classic run-and-jump masterpiece, it does include all the ingredients that made *Sonic* such a treat: cute characters, fast action, wild colors, good music, multiplane scrolling and a smooth control scheme.

Occasionally, the game will throw you a curve by turning entire rooms upside-down. I got fed up and dizzy from two or three unsuccessful attempts to navigate through these areas, so I breezed through them by looking at the screen's reflection in a mirror that I had placed on the floor. Hey, go ahead and call me a cheater—I prefer to think of it as resourcefulness!

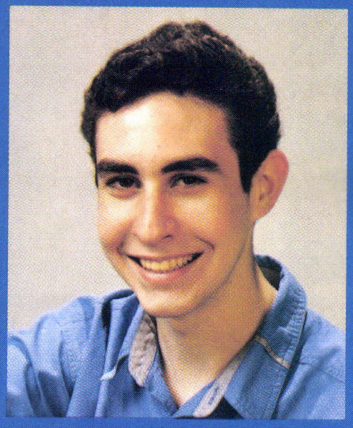




Created by British designer Chris Sorrell, *James Pond II* is just as entertaining as the original title.

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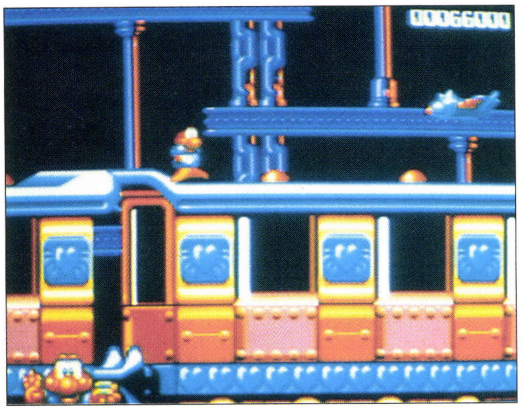
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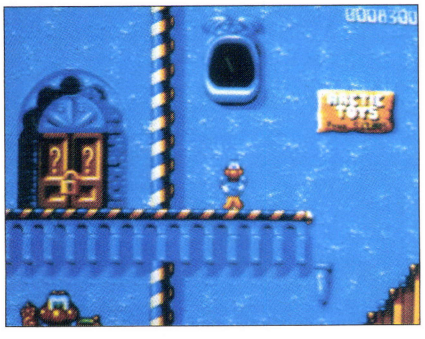
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Though the sequel doesn't include as many bad puns as the original, the decidedly British *humour* of Sorrell & Co. does shine through on several occasions. "Come on lads, give us a hand!" calls Alvin the penguin as he and his mates drag James Pond's lifeless body off the screen at the end of the game. "Smoked kipper for tea!" they shout.

Of course, that's not the ending you'll want to see, and, with only two continues, it can be quite difficult to work your way up to the ultimate challenge at Dr. Maybe's Circus. There are shortcuts to be found, but the game's most ambitious task lies in the meticulous search for secret rooms and hidden surprises. Unlike *Sonic*'s gold rings and computer screens, the bonus items and power-ups in *Codename: Robocod* are as varied as they are plentiful. You'll find cowboy boots, faucets, corkscrews, fried eggs, Mickey Mouse T-shirts and dozens of other detailed items everywhere you look—a real challenge for the completist.

I thoroughly enjoyed *Codename: Robocod*—but I really don't understand why it was decided to feature James Pond in an adventure that takes place almost entirely on land. Considering his background as a secret agent, Pond is like a fish out of water, literally *and* figuratively. The Robocod angle is even more out of place: The Robosuit gives him no special powers other than the ability to stretch up and grab ceilings of any height. In this instance, the colorful, off-the-wall visuals and happy-go-lucky soundtrack are about a million miles away from serving as a *James Bond* or *RoboCop* spoof—which is exactly what the general public is going to expect when it hears the game's title.

In short: A great game, but one that would have been just as good—if not better—with a more appropriate hero.

—C.B.

Electronic Arts
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The Legend of the Mystical Ninja

KONAMI

For the Super NES ($59.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10

Forget the title. *The Legend of the Mystical Ninja* isn't really a martial-arts game. The setting is a cartoony world where elements from ancient Japanese culture (like samurai and geisha) are as typical as your character purchasing pizza slices. What's supposed to be quirky, winds up being a mish-mash to American tastes. Talk about culture clash.

You play Kid Ying or his mentor Dr. (you saw it coming) Yang. Two can also play together as the pair. Something called the Dragonbeast is unleashing a plague. Ying and/or Yang must travel through ten levels of play to find a ghost princess who will prevent this. If this story sounds sparse, it's because the instructions and game do little to elaborate.

***The Legend of the Mystical Ninja* focuses around the cartoony world where elements from ancient Japanese culture are typical.**

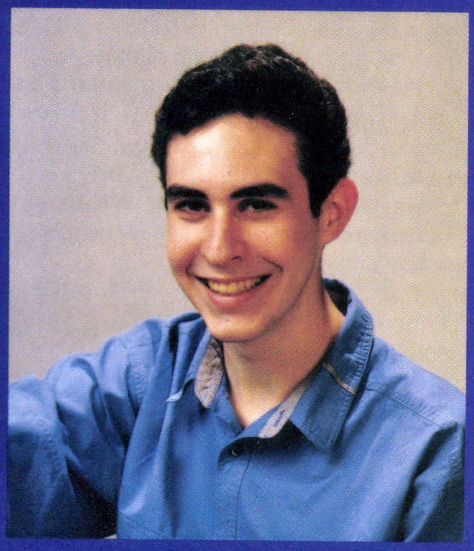


Each level consists of two parts. The first takes place on a layout of a town, such as your character's home, Horo-Horo. Action here is similar to that of a *Zelda* adventure, as Ying and Yang enter buildings to look for clues and buy items. The second part is a scrolling beat-'em-up that takes place outside of town. At the end, you confront a big thug of an end-boss.



In the towns, you can buy stuff like body armor for protection; sandals so that Ying or Yang will move faster; and food to restore their health. Money is obtained by simply beating up the townsfolk and taking the coins they leave behind. This is justified, as the people are under the spell of Dragonbeast. Oh.

You can also get money by going into certain buildings to



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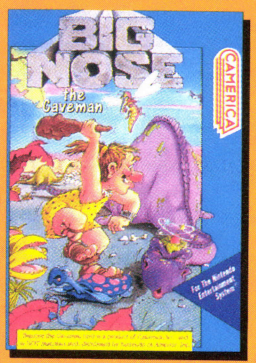


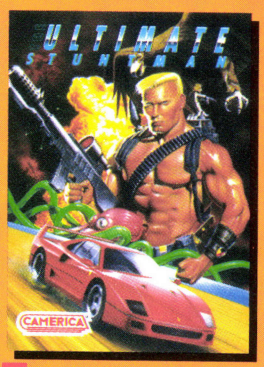
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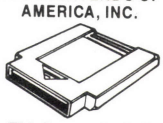
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bet on pony races, take a chance on the lottery or get a job. Some of these ventures, like betting on rolling dice, are pretty dumb. Other activities fare better, notably the "mole-bashing" job (which plays like those machines with pop-up mechanical weasels to pound). But time and effort are usually wasted earning cash through these means, since it's easier to club away at the wandering populace whenever you need money.

Some of the thunked townspeople leave behind a cat that you can catch. These kitties are invaluable, because they will modify your character's current weapon into a better one. Ying's mere stick can be upgraded to a long-stringed yo-yo, for instance.

Special powers you can get, categorized as "jutsu," will do away with the enemy in various ways. They are to be used just in the second half of a level. What's more, you can only use jutsu after you've collected ten scrolls.

The promise of 16-bit video-gaming holds a lot over the longtime 8-bit standard. Realistically, it doesn't always deliver. *Mystical Ninja* fails in two points crucial for the Super NES. Its play is rote, and the game's overall graphics don't utilize the capabilities of the system all that well.

All of this wouldn't be so bad if *Mystical Ninja* was fun to play. Though it might look like an adventure game, its premise is really centered around clobbering the boss character at the level's end. What results is contrived item accumulation, nondriven action and hollow play.

—Howard H. Wen

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The Simpsons—Bart vs. The World

ACCLAIM

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10

Bart Simpson an artist? You wouldn't think so, but his drawing has just won first prize in the Krusty the Clown art contest—a trip around the world!

Sounds like a great deal, but behind the scenes lurks the true reason that Bart has won the contest: Mr. Montgomery Burns, owner of Springfield's nuclear power plant—and Homer's boss. The entire contest was a scheme set up by Burns to try and get rid of the Simpsons altogether. It seems that ever since Homer has worked at the plant, Burns has lost money. To help him with his plans, Burns has enlisted the aid of several of his relatives around the globe where Bart will be traveling: Fu Manchu Burns of China, the Abominable Snow Burns of the North Pole, Ramses Burns of Egypt and, lastly, Eric Von Burns, the film director.

There are eight action sequences spread out between the four areas of the game, plus special "Single Screen Game" areas where strategy or a quick eye are necessary for success. The action sequences have Bart climbing through icy caverns, along the Great Wall of China and even up the Pyramids of Egypt, searching for Krusty items.

The seven single-game sequences may appear more than once throughout the areas:

• Remember those little plastic sliding puzzles with 15 numbers on them and one blank spot? Translate that game to the

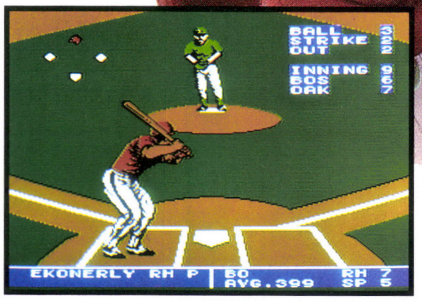
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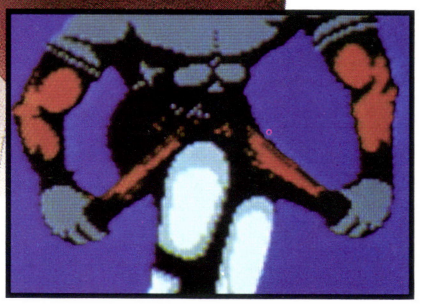




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DATA EAST

CIRCLE #132 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

screen, throw in a background picture from the Simpsons' photo album and you will have the idea of the first game.

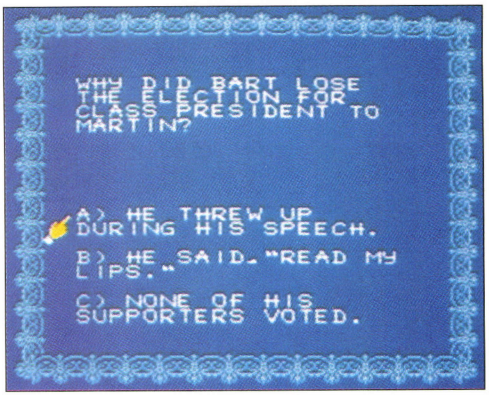
• A Simpsons trivia challenge will quiz players with questions that relate stories from the TV show, and a slot machine with character faces instead of fruit will pay off with Krusty collectibles when the jackpot is hit.

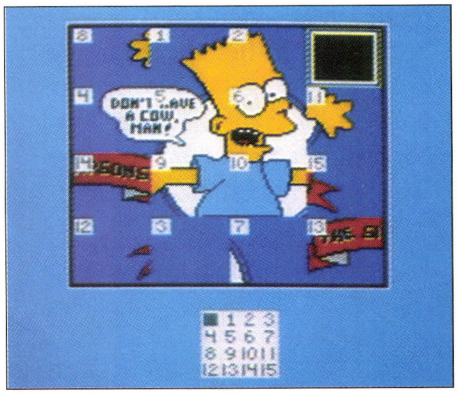
• When your throat gets a bit dry, drop by Moe's bar, where Bart must dodge bottles and other objects while grabbing collectibles as they slide by.

• A coffin-opening sequence has Bart trying to open three coffins in the correct sequence before he may exit, and, in a similar sequence, Maggie drops in to help choose which igloo the Krusty icon is under in the old shell game.

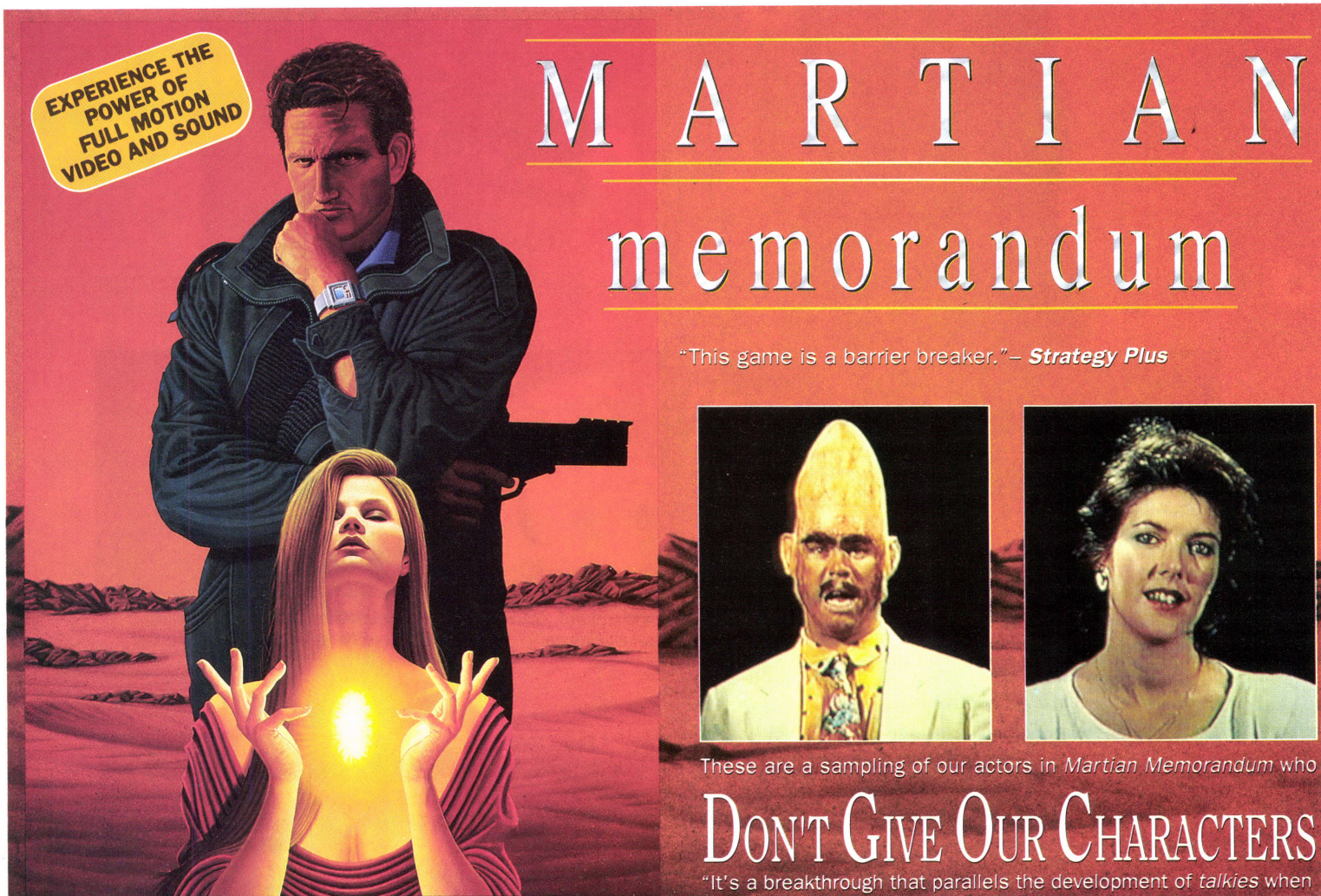
• Finally, there is a concentration-type game, where Bart may have only five mismatches as he tries to match up two cards for eight characters from the show—16 cards in all.

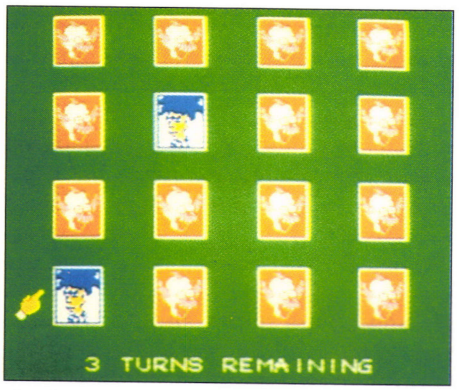
Throughout all of these areas, Bart must strive to find the hidden Krusty collectibles, as they award both points and extra lives if gathered in quantity. There are also plenty of firecracker balls for Bart to use as ammo, and hidden items that allow Bart to also become invincible for a short period—or fly the skies as Bartman!





One player only may control Bart as he climbs, jumps, skates and flies through the scenes. A practice option gives players the chance to work on the single-screen games, but not on the action sequences—they have





to be learned the hard way. Bart starts with only three lives, and may be hit five times before losing a life—and there are no continues. Fortunately, Bart may grab the occasional Grape Squishee to replenish some of his energy, so the situation isn't hopeless.

I had high expectations when I first sat down to this one, as the opening music, animation and story line sequences are done very well. Once the game gets started, though, the excitement kind of dwindles. The graphics and sound effects are ho-hum through the action areas, and the special games can become tedious to an extent. The story line and ideas behind the game are just fine, but the actual meat of the game just didn't satisfy me, even though I did make progress into the heart of the game. *Simpsons* fans will likely get something out of *Bart vs. The World*, but don't count on the name alone to provide the game play. Take a look first.

—Brent Walker

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Bucky O'Hare

KONAMI
For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($39.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10

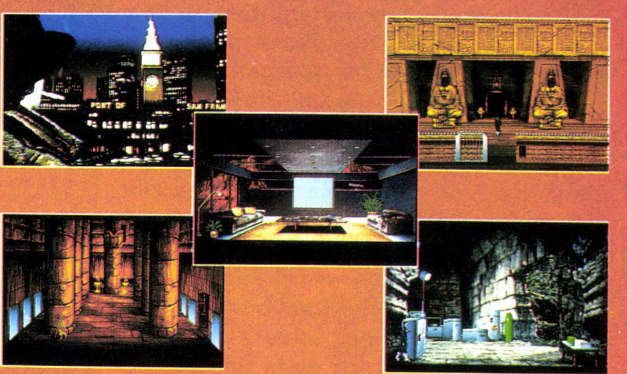
If you were to consider what kind of animal would be appropriate as a superhero figure, rabbits probably wouldn't be high up on your list; but, after taking a look at *Bucky O'Hare*, you might change your mind.

As the leader of the five-member crew of the rebel spaceship *Righteous Indignation*, Bucky O'Hare needs all the luck that his two rabbit feet can give him.

Tex Murphy, the hard boiled gumshoe of MEAN STREETS, returns to your VGA screen in *MARTIAN MEMORANDUM*. Marshall Alexander, the president of TerraForm, hires Tex to find his missing daughter.

Tex faces murder, deception, romance and prophecy as he investigates the disappearance and mystery of the *MARTIAN MEMORANDUM*. What he discovers takes him from his home in San Francisco to the Martian colonies in the year 2039. As Mars hides secrets just below its surface, so does Marshall Alexander...

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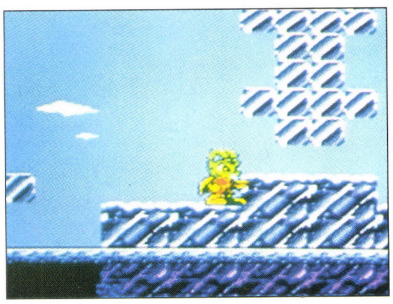
His four crew members have been kidnapped by Air Marshal Felix Von Ribbettropp of the evil Toad Empire, and imprisoned on four different planets under Toad control. Playing the part of Bucky, your goal is to first free each of your friends from Toad imprisonment, then take on the Air Marshal himself in the Toad Magna Tanker spaceship.



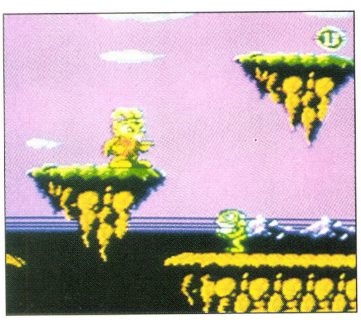
The Toads have allies to help them, so Bucky will have to go up against spiders, worms, bees, fish, laser cannons, giant insects and even mammal-eating plants, just to name a few. As each crew member is rescued, his powers will complement Bucky's. You may switch to another crew member at any time merely by hitting the **SELECT** button. Each crew member has a particular weapon and a different special ability that will make him useful in different areas of the game, so the order that they are rescued in is important.



Bucky, on the other hand, has a normal weapon, but has the special ability to jump very high by holding down the fire button and letting the power meter build to its maximum. There are three power levels for these special abilities, which may be increased by special power-up icons found throughout the game. Dead-Eye Duck is Bucky's gunnery officer, and he has a three-way gun, as well as the ability to climb walls. Android First Class Blinky has bombs that can destroy walls and ice, and the ability to fly for short periods of time. Only by combining the abilities of Bucky's crew will you stand a chance of defeating the Toad Empire.



Each planet has several stages contained within it, as does the Magna Tanker. There aren't always boss guys at the end of each stage, but they are scattered throughout the game, which breaks up the flow of the game nicely. There is plenty of blasting action necessary to wipe out the Toadies, their cronies and the toadlike weapons systems, but there are also several areas where planning and carefully timed jumps are the key to survival.



Bucky has a life meter to let you know how much of your health remains and a power meter that shows your current power level for your special ability. Power icons, 1-ups, bonus points and health icons are scattered about with enough regularity to keep Bucky going, but unlimited continues from the beginning of the current stage are enough to keep even the most hapless player in the game. An additional password feature is also available, where a password will be given for the completion of major areas within the game; so, if you have to power down, you may continue at least close to where you left off.

Bucky O'Hare strikes a nice balance between being difficult and easy. The early portions of the game should be easily handled by even the most inexperienced players, but the difficulty steadily increases throughout the game, so that, even with the continues, it will take some time to complete.

The action and challenges are different enough from other games to keep everything interesting, with decent graphics and sound to round things out. Admittedly, the graphics aren't extraordinary, but the way they are done, especially the characters during the introduction sequences, gives the game character.

I enjoyed the game, and I wouldn't be surprised if *Bucky O'Hare* makes another appearance in the continuing war against the Toads.

—B.W.

Konami
900 Deerfield Parkway
Buffalo Grove, IL 60089-4570
(708) 215-5100

Super Off-Road

TRADEWEST

For the Super NES ($54.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

The backdrop for the action is any of 16 different tracks contained within an indoor stadium, with flags and pylons marking the way over bumps, hills and the lakes of mud and water. Slight variations increase the track scenarios to a total of 64 different versions that may be raced. Obstacles placed on the track (such as hay bales) or having the race proceed in the opposite direction are some examples of these variations.

Unlike the original, only two players may compete as either a red or blue truck out on the track. However, there will always be four trucks in each race, with either two or three of them being computer-controlled.

As play proceeds from race to race, a player must finish in at least third place to

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CAN YOU DRIVE?
CAN YOU STRETCH UP HIGH?
CAN YOU...

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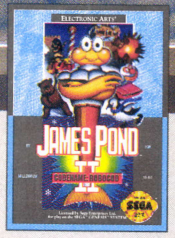
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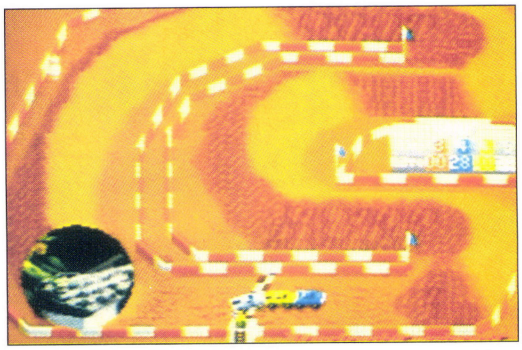
CIRCLE #122 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

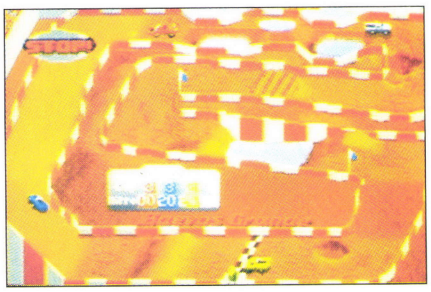
continue to the next track. If you don't make the cut, you have the option to continue or end. Unlimited continues are available, but your truck loses some of the extra upgrade items you have purchased—add-ons that are necessary for one to stay competitive.

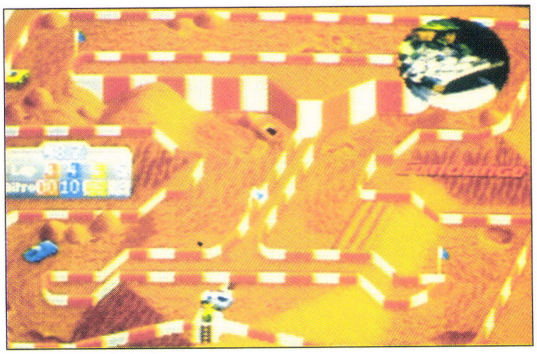
To increase the incentive for placing high in each race, money is awarded for the first three places after each race. First place gets $150,000, second gets $100,000 and third gets a mere $50,000. This may sound like a lot, but these trucks are expensive to upgrade. After the prize money has been handed out, an equipment-upgrade screen appears, where better parts for your vehicle may be purchased. A more powerful engine will run you $100,000, and, with six engine classes available, you can see how quickly that money will be spent. Tires (for better traction), shocks (less bounce on the bumps and tighter cornering) and acceleration upgrades are also available (also six classes each), as well as the most important items: the nitro boosts.

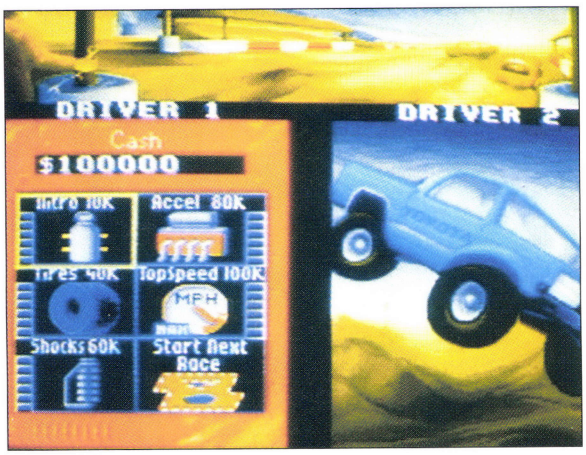
The computer-controlled vehicles don't just leisurely cruise around the track, so expect to be challenged each and every race—even when your truck is maxed out with performance items. Learning to hoard and properly use your nitros is the key to success, once you master negotiating the many track hazards. Money and nitro boosts may also be collected as the race is taking place, and they appear as small icons that show up in random locations on the tracks.

The visual portions of *Super Off-Road* are faithful to the original, with nicely drawn tracks and trucks and an animated starting gun with checkered flag sequence to begin and end each race. The majority of the graphics are devoted to representations of the muddy dips and curvature of the tracks, but everything looks great.











***Super Off-Road*, by Tradewest, is a straighforward racing game that any player should be able to play and master.**

The music and sound effects are very good—the roar of the engines as the trucks take off and the whine of the nitrous kicking in fit right in with some great background music that plays during and between the races.

The only questionable aspect of the game would be its longevity, as even with the variety of tracks and truck options, it doesn't take long to max out everything, and I personally lost interest after that point. Otherwise, *Super Off-Road* is a straightforward racing game that any player should be able to play and master, and will provide enjoyment for anyone who liked the original or has the urge to go muddin'.

—B.W.

Tradewest
2400 S. Highway 75
Corsicana, TX 75110
(903) 874-2683

Monster in My Pocket

KONAMI

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($39.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	**3**	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7	8	9	10

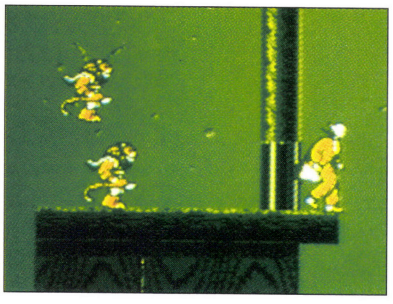
Look out! Monsters! Hey, wait a minute. These monsters are little—only a couple of inches high. They sure can't do much damage to us full-sized people. However, that hasn't stopped the bad monsters from challenging the good monsters to an all-out war in the world of humans. In Konami's new *Monster in My Pocket*, you can help the good monsters win the fight by taking control of a tiny Dracula or Frankenstein and wiping out evil wherever you can find it.

You'll start out in Jack's room (Jack is the only human who knows about the monsters and is the good monsters' friend), and battle your way through a world filled with huge radios (at least as compared with pint-sized monsters) and mountainous chairs, among other gargantuan furniture. The bad monsters will attack relentlessly. Your only chance is to study their moves and blast them before they can get to you. Along the way, you'll find hearts in jars that'll replenish your lifeline.

If you get past Jack's room, you then must make your way through the kitchen, down into a sewer pipe (yuck!), past a construction site and through a bamboo garden before you'll reach the final battle at Monster Mountain. Each location has plenty of natural obstacles, as well as more monsters than will fit in a gym bag. (Hey, don't laugh. You can get a lot of these little guys into a bag that size.) Natural obstacles include things like hot stove tops and barbed wire.



At the end of each area, you must defeat a boss monster. The bosses you'll meet include: Spring-Heeled Jack, who leaps about and throws knives; Bigfoot, who can freeze you solid with his icy breath; and Kraken, who rises from below and stings you with his writhing tentacles. Of course, each boss has his own set of monster friends that you must defeat before you can get to the boss. You'll battle zombies, skeletons, hunchbacks, witches, ghouls, ogres, ghosts and just about every creature of evil you can imagine.

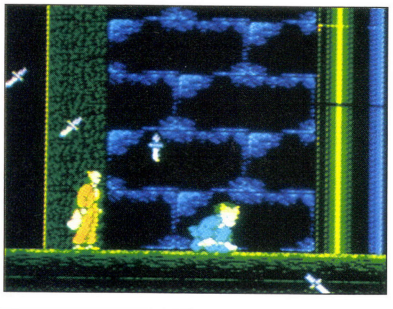


Unfortunately, while there's plenty of action for the jump-and-shoot gamer, it's all been done before, with very little extra included in the game to make it special. In fact, *Monster in My Pocket* is one long string of jumping and shooting, with nothing to break up the monotony. For example, except for things like giant keys that can be picked up and thrown, there are no special weapons to discover. In addition, although each enemy has its own method of attack, none is particularly tricky. It'll take only about two attempts at a level to learn everything you need to know to defeat it.

Monster in My Pocket is truly ordinary. It seems to me that its creators were monstrously lazy and put together a skeleton crew of a game, the minimum to get by.

—C.W.

Konami Inc.
900 Deerfield Parkway
Buck Grove, IL 60089-4510
(708) 215-5100





Buck Rogers

ELECTRONIC ARTS

For the Sega Genesis ($69.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10

Welcome to the year 2456, about 400 years following the nuclear war that persuaded the governments of Earth to finally disarm their doomsday weapons, and about 200 years after the oppressive RAM (Russo-American Mercantile) wrested control of Earth. In this hopeful

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year, the rebels of Old Earth, fed up with RAM rule, have formed NEO (New Earth Organization) in order to fight for freedom. With their new leader, Buck Rogers, whose frozen body was discovered in space, NEO is confident of victory.

But they need your help. In *Buck Rogers*, a new role-playing game (RPG) for the Sega Genesis, you must guide your band of six rebels through seven danger-fraught space adventures. In your travels, you'll help thwart a RAM attack on Earth, clean the evil life forms from a drifting RAM spyship, battle RAM battleships in deep space, rescue children from a military base in the asteroids and much more.





When you slap the cartridge into your machine, you can, by selecting the "prerolled" characters, begin the adventure immediately, or you can take the time to create the six members of the rebel party yourself. Much like the characters created using the Dungeons & Dragons gaming rules, each rebel has different strength, dexterity, constitution, charisma and tech (technical know-how) scores. In addition, three races and four careers are available. A well-rounded party must have a good mix of abilities and attributes.



Throughout the adventure, you explore the locations to which you're sent, unearthing clues and completing the assigned tasks. As you move through an area, random enemy attacks keep you perched on your battle toes. When combat starts, you must fight to the death, although you can put each character into auto-mode, wherein you sit back and let the computer handle the combat details. If you like to get your hands bloody, though, you can take full control of the combat, arming the rebels, maneuvering them about the battlefield and targeting their attacks. Whether you or the computer choreographs the fights, plan on meeting some horrendously gruesome enemies.



Buck Rogers plays like the typical Genesis RPG, with a dash of *Metal Gear*, the classic for the Nintendo Entertainment System, thrown into the broth. But, unlike most RPGs, the outcomes of battles seem based to a great extent on chance, rather than on strength gained by gathering experience. Because characters are given level advances only after they complete a mission, there's no way for them to gain an advantage over a specific enemy by gathering additional experience points. You'll find yourself saving the game before each major battle, and then replaying the scene until luck favors your side.

More disappointing, though, are this game's primitive graphics. Only a minimum of effort has been lavished on each location's background, and the characters themselves are rendered as mostly unremarkable blobs. In the graphics department, at least, *Buck Rogers* can't hold a candle to RPGs like the *Phantasy Star* series. The music, too, is mostly pretty dreadful stuff (although the sound effects are okay). Thank heavens the music can be turned off.

In spite of its weaknesses, *Buck Rogers* plays well enough to give role-playing fans something to do while they wait for the next *Phantasy Star*. If, however, you have no interest in RPGs, this one sure won't convert you.

—C.W.

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Smash TV

ACCLAIM

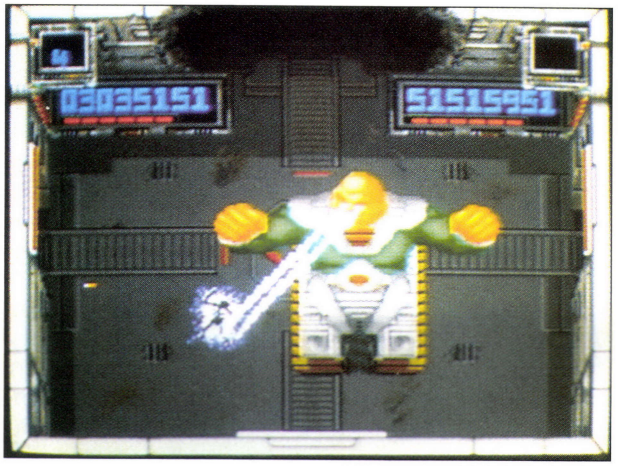
For the Super NES ($59.95)

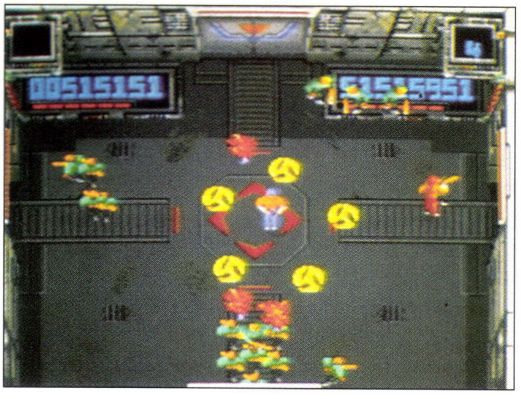
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

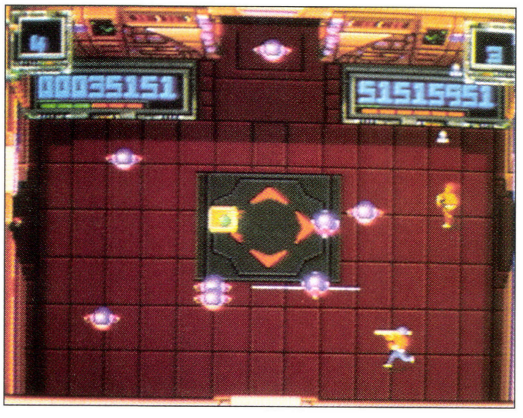
If we're to believe video-game designers, game shows are gonna start getting real nasty in a few years. Games like *Fatal Rewind* and Acclaim's SNES adaptation of the arcade game *Smash TV* ride on the theme of Stephen King's *The Running Man*: games played by heavily armored contestants in high-tech arenas, competing to win luggage, a trip to Bermuda or a grand prize chosen especially for them (like their continued existence).

Here's how we play the game. You, and maybe a friend (if you're playing in two-player mode), get your basic armor and gun, then head out to the first arena. Battle any enemies you find there while we drop in grenades, bombs, missile

launchers, temporary shields, speeder-uppers, bonus lives, keys to locked areas and other valuable gifts. Pick 'em up before they disappear! Once you've cleared the first arena, you'll be able to move around and explore all the arenas on each level. But look out, because one of them contains Da Boss, and you'll have to eliminate Da Boss before you can move on to the next round of arenas. Clear all of the arenas on each of the four levels and find the hidden SuperDome, and you, too, can be the *Smash TV* Grand Champion!









The camera catches the action from high above, away from the wild pyrotechnics and ground-shaking violence. Thus, the players, and most of the enemies, are fairly small on-screen, though still detailed enough to clearly show the important things (what kind of weapon you're carrying, whether or not that enemy is pounding on you with a bat, etc.). But the bosses are huge and animated more fluidly and realistically than in most other 16-bit home games. Basically, this is a sci-fi version of games like *Berzerk*, *Robotron* and *Gauntlet*, where opponents flood you in waves from all sides, in outrageous numbers, forcing you to fight hard to reach those all-important bonuses. You can't accidentally gun down your partner; nice not to have to worry about that. You *can* finish the game without finding the SuperDome, but you won't get the optimal ending.

Control doesn't come easily. You want to hold the controller slightly at a diagonal and use the cluster of four buttons as a diamond. With practice, you'll be able to shoot in eight directions quite deftly. However, a joystick would make this much easier.

Despite the small characters, the graphics are excellent overall. They're spectacular in all the right places, with good backgrounds and screen-shaking special effects. Yet the slowdowns are nowhere near as frequent as in most other SNES games with this level of screen activity. There's some noticeable flickering at times, mostly with the bosses, but nothing that affects game play, and only when the other animation on-screen is ambitious.

The music and sound effects are also top notch; there's a variety of themes, convincing sound effects and screams of pain that'll bring tears to your eyes.

Smash TV is suitably sarcastic about its own content. Finish a level, and scores are tallied, with the huge beefcake players flailing their arms in delight for winning toasters. Getting killed involves hideously graphic electrocutions, or you may simply spin around and dissolve into the ground. While *Smash TV* is the kind of relentlessly brutal game that will make some parents want to unplug the SNES and hide it in the attic, it's also the kind of game that two kids (of any age) are likely to have incredible fun playing. And, for the losers, we have some splendid parting gifts....

—J.M.

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F-22 Interceptor

ELECTRONIC ARTS

For the Sega Genesis ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	**10**
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	**10**
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	**10**

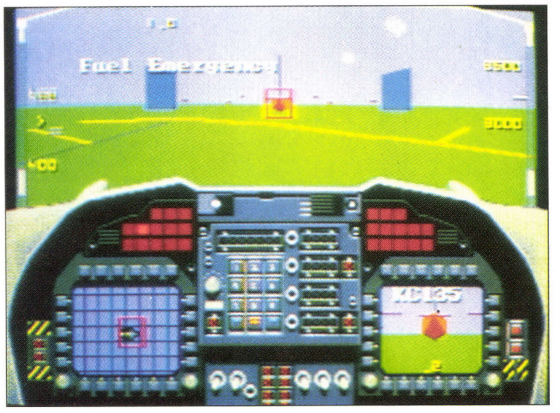
F-22 Interceptor has the action of an arcade jet game, yet incorporates the strategy of a simulator—just enough to make it more "respectable" among other flight shooters, if you will. *F-22* features air-to-air and air-to-ground combat, usually happening together. Three levels guide the unfamiliar from instructional missions—complete with helpful, on-screen instructions—to full-fledged combat scenarios. Four theaters of war are listed, each having 30 missions.

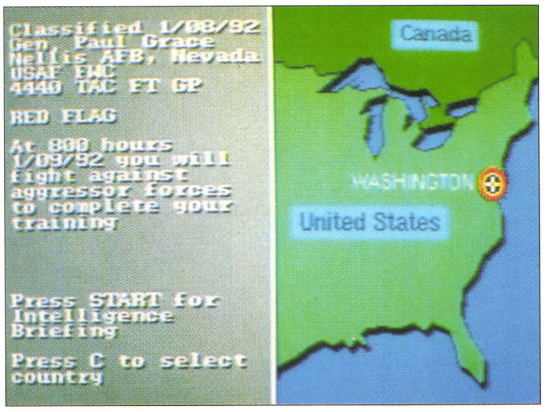
The first theater is basic training over the United States. Next, you go to Korea to prevent North Korea from penetrating the DMZ. Then it's off to Saudi Arabia to stir up another desert storm with Iraqi forces. The toughest is the Soviet Union. Mig pilots are on their way to the U.S. on a renegade mission. This makes for a total of 120 missions.

If this is not enough action, you can go against the aces from the four countries listed, using cannon fire only. Still sounds like a piece of cake? Then customize your own missions and determine such details as how aggressive (or passive) your opponents are and the amount of weaponry they shoot at you.

The numerous enemy weapons range from various Mig fighters and helicopters to ground equipment like antiaircraft missile launchers and tanks. Missile silos, communication towers, military headquarters and other buildings are some of the targets you'll have to demolish.

Your F-22 is armed pretty well—but you must use your weapons conservatively. Three air-to-air and three air-to-ground missiles are available, depending on the mission. The air-to-airs have various ranges and heat-seeking ability. The TOW and Maverick air-to-grounds are manually guided by you, thus ensuring hits from farther distances.







Besides shooting and blowing up things, there are the usual takeoff and landing sequences to handle. And a midair linkup with a fuel tanker adds a nice touch. But, if you don't want to bother with these details, you can shut them off from your game.

In fact, almost everything can be turned off or adjusted at whim, from the game's music to your enemies' "combat nervousness." You can arm your jet with unlimited fuel, ammunition or missiles whenever needed—even during combat. *F-22* can be made as challenging or as easy as you want. You can play it like a "realistic" simulator or turn it into a fancier *Afterburner*. Talk about having it your way.

The graphics are great. Aircraft and ground weapons are rendered in the same 3-D style as a computer simulation. And things move smoothly and as fast as you set the action, without a slowdown in animation that I have yet to observe.

The game's perspective switches to the enemy's and will depict missiles being launched. Other scenes show your plane landing, taking off, a 360-degree view of your jet, your craft from behind (making the graphics akin to that of *Afterburner*) and so on. Of course, you can turn this fancy stuff off if you prefer staring at the cockpit.

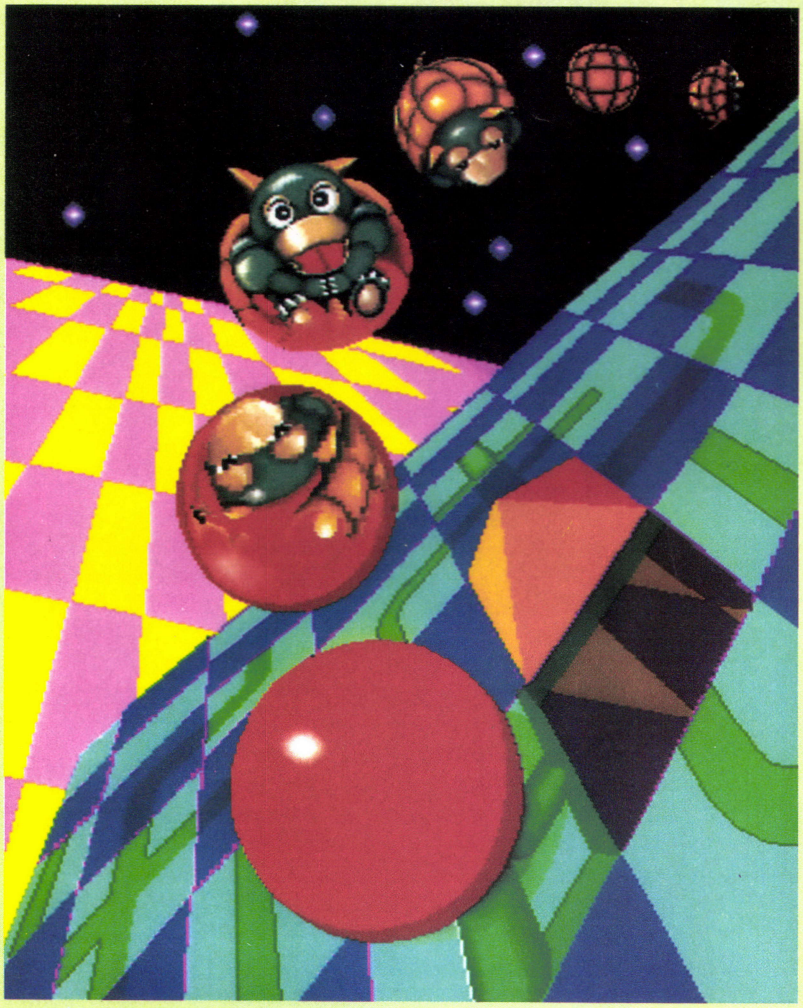
I haven't even gone into other niceties, like the effects of sun glare or "red outs" and "blackouts" that obscure your vision as your jet pulls Gs, but you get the idea. Electronic Arts strives to bring computer-style entertainment to video-game systems without sacrificing complex play. With *F-22 Interceptor*, it has succeeded in doing this to the jet combat simulator, and has made it easier to play, as well.

—H.H.W.

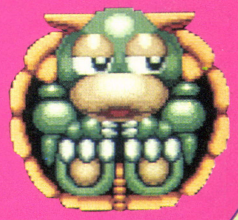
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Fun to watch, and even more fun to play. Junctjon is an action game masterpiece !



THE PUZZLE GAME



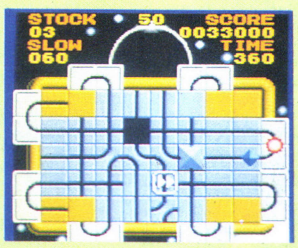
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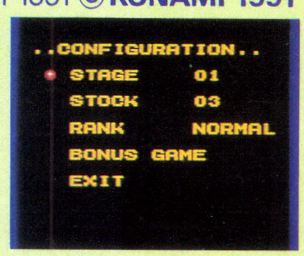
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ILLUSTRATION BY ALAN HUNTER

People seldom say a kind word about reruns, but most gamers would gladly take a 1992 as exciting as the year just ended. Despite many lingering problems, the electronic-entertainment business made great strides in 1991. The 8-bit software titles started to fade to black, but the amount of 16-bit and IBM PC games more than took up the slack with double-digit sales gains during the summer and fall.

There's new technology coming that will blow the doors off today's game console and computer gear, but publishers didn't sit on their hands waiting for multimedia and CD to capture the public's imagination. Development groups repeatedly pushed hardware to the limit in 1991 with a new generation of superslick, highly detailed games, particularly on the computer side of the slate.

A similar situation occurred in the mid-1980s, when IBM PC began to overtake the 6502-based computers. Companies were caught between the desire to explore the potential of more powerful machines and the necessity of catering to the existing market. Some produced multidisk monsters that leapt far beyond typical 48K computer games. Unfortunately, ground breakers like *Time Zone* (Sierra On-Line) required a whole stack of disks, which made play unwieldy. Some of this year's finest games are the same story; only owners of top-of-the-line equipment can get full enjoyment from fantastic titles like *ActRaiser*, *Martian Memorandum* and *Wing Commander II*.

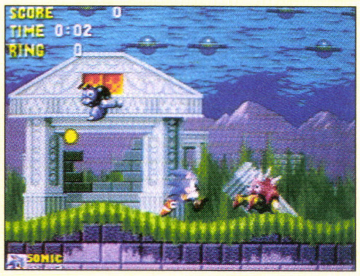
Arnie Katz, computer entertainment editor, chaired a panel of judges comprised of VG&CE's writers and editors. This panel examined hundreds of video and computer games published between October 1, 1990 and November 1, 1991. Here we present the judges' choices as the very best electronic-entertainment games.

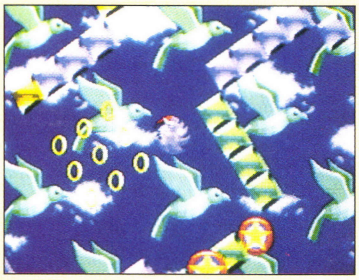
The judges hope that readers whose favorites didn't make this year's list will forgive such omissions. This is VG&CE's salute to the best of the year. And now...the winners!

BEST VIDEO GAMES OF THE YEAR

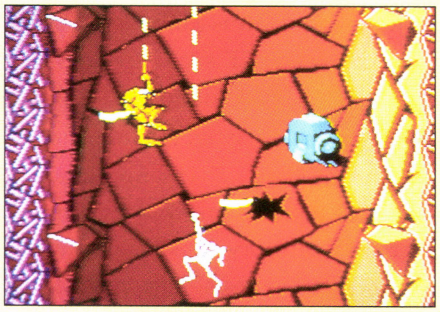
VIDEO GAME OF THE YEAR

Of all the awards, the best game of the year is perhaps the easiest to decide on. It can be harder to figure out the one game with the best sound or the best strategy, but the overall best game is the one game that runs hot on all cylinders and strikes you hard on all counts. For that reason, Sega's *Sonic the Hedgehog* is VG&CE's pick for Best Video Game of 1991.





With this fast-paced action contest, Sega has created not only a successful game, but a lasting character in the form of a sassy, blue hedgehog. He's becoming more visible each day, seeing that he is now packaged in every Genesis sold, and he also made his first cameo appearance in Sega's *Rad Mobile* arcade game. He's not soon to go away, with recent Sega Master System and Game Gear releases of *Sonic the Hedgehog* and another Genesis game slated for this fall. But the important thing to consider is how Sonic brought the 16-bit market into people's faces.



HONORABLE MENTION

Characters are a big part of any successful video game. The year 1991 brought to view some new faces—the Battletoads. Not quite as refined a group as the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, the Battletoads are a gangly limbed bunch of reptiles, certainly not the type you would expect to be videogame heroes. The game *Battletoads* (Tradewest for the NES) wasn't just these characters, though. It was exciting, edge-of-the-seat action, reflex testing and plain fun.

Let us not forget the first Disney character, Mickey Mouse, to hit the Genesis in a game—though the count is higher now with *Fantasia* and *Quackshot* also on the Genesis' software list. *Castle of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse* (Sega for the Genesis) didn't just bank on the popularity of everyone's favorite mouse, but offered an action game that provided hours of challenge to everyone who took it on.

BEST SPORTS VIDEO GAME

When our editors got together to discuss which games would receive our coveted awards, the only unanimous choice was in the Sports category. *NHL Hockey* (Electronic Arts for the Genesis) employs state-of-the-art technology, something that we've come to expect from this cutting-edge company, but doesn't let it get in the way of the game play. Realistic hockey is what everyone is raving about with *NHL Hockey*, from the sounds of the game to the licensed lineups that make up the rosters of each team. Electronic Arts seems to be the team to beat in sports simulations.



HONORABLE MENTION

The 1991 football market for the Genesis brought us a few entries. Among them, Sega signed a big deal with San Francisco 49er Joe Montana and promptly unleashed a 16-bit wonder with his name on it; but EA countered that with a Genesis version of *John Madden Football*. The latter installment just beat out *Montana* for the the king of the gridiron hill, thanks to its digitized speech of play-by-play announcing and its full 28-team lineup to choose from.

A late entry in the video-game sports field, *Roger Clemens MVP Baseball* (LJN for the NES) is showing that it doesn't take 16-bit power to be successful. Receiving its name from the Boston Red Sox power pitcher, LJN has filled its cartridge with realistic on-field viewpoints, including several different camera angles with interactive close-ups. A parody on player names is used, though realistic player statistics are implemented.

BEST ACTION VIDEO GAME

This is a big category in our awards, and the winner is a sleeper. *Micro Machines* (Camerica for the NES) isn't licensed for play on the NES, nor is it easy to find in stores. However, everyone who plays this game is instantly



drawn in by its cute but challenging game play. Based on the little toy vehicles (from Galoob Toys), this cartridge creates an innovative driving game that takes place on the types of venues where you'd expect to find these little autos: table tops, bathtubs and more. But it's not just the scenery that does it; the control of the Micro Machines is also impeccable *and* offers that rarity in video games today: head-to-head competition. At all costs, you should seek out this gem.

Honorable Mention

As discussed before, *Sonic the Hedgehog* (Sega for the Genesis) contains a lot of action, so it's impossible to ignore it in this category. When Sonic gets a running start, rolls into a ball and heads down one of the many curving tubes, is there anything that can beat it? Okay, so *Micro Machines* beat it to win the category, but there's not much else that beats it. *Sonic the Hedgehog* is hot stuff.

Nintendo also unveiled its latest entry in the console market with the Super Nintendo Entertainment System, and, as expected, a new *Super Mario* game surfaced with it. *Super Mario World* (Nintendo for the SNES) showed off the new hardware—featuring vivid graphics and wonderful sound—but also introduced a lot of new play mechanics to the genre. *SMW* offers 96 goals that puzzle the player, but mainly lots of the typical *Super Mario* action that gamers have come to expect.

Best Science-Fiction Video Game

Last year's Sci-Fi winner, *Whip Rush* by Renovation, was considered a hot game by VG&CE's editors. "What makes *Whip Rush* stand out from its peers," we said, "is its attention to detail and quality...." It's no surprise, then, that Renovation would again take the Sci-Fi category by storm with *Gaiares* on the Genesis. The cartridge is filled with tons of exciting encounters in space, again packed with quality graphics, sound and, above all, intense challenge. Renovation seems to be the team to beat.

Honorable Mention

Veigues Tactical Gladiator (NEC for the TurboGrafx-16) puts you in the steel shoes of a powerful robot, but there are other robots trying to prevent you from completing your mission. The game is all fast-moving action, with metal creatures whooshing in from all sides. Now if only we had a couple to fight L.A. traffic....

EA has done a good job of bringing some of its wonderful computer games to the console market without much sacrifice—in fact, some benefit from the translation, it seems. One game that made the trip to the Genesis without loss is *Starflight*. The Genesis version of *Starflight* seemed to bridge the gap in a Genesis genre that was a void. *Starflight*'s futuristic, interplanetary exploration theme let gamers come in contact with alien races and explore 270 star systems with 800 planets to survey.

Best Simulation Video Game

The only cartridges available for the first few weeks of the SNES' store life were a trio of Nintendo titles: *Super Mario World* (included with the system), an arcade scroller; *Pilotwings*, a simulator that tested your ability to fly through the air with the greatest of ease and *F-Zero*, a driving game that brings *Pole Position* into the '90s. *Pilotwings* stood out as a game with little tie to anything before it. Sure, there have been plane-piloting games before, but that is just a fraction of what makes up this SNES game.



The telling factor is watching someone trying to hit the rings with the plane, or the parachutist attempting to land on the moving platform with the jet pack or maneuvering away from enemy fire in the helicopter scenes. Whenever a player is squirming in his chair, as if he can actually affect the actions of his on-screen counterpart that way, it's apparent that he has lost the concept that it's just a game. He's living it, and that is the key to a successful simulation.

Honorable Mention

A late 1991 entry in the category is *Road Rash* (Electronic Arts for the Genesis), a motorcycle racing game with a little bit more. It requires you to not only make it to the finish line, but to battle your way through the race to get there. The best parts of *Road Rash* are the scenery and animation—you cruise through varied terrain, and you have to kick, punch and slap to carve a clear path through competing bikers. I don't think when Atari came up with *Pole Position* it ever envisioned that the game would evolve to include weapons—but here it is.

Best Strategy Video Game

The use of CDs as a storage medium is only now being tapped, but 1992 will

Help Your

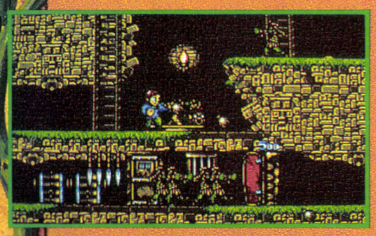
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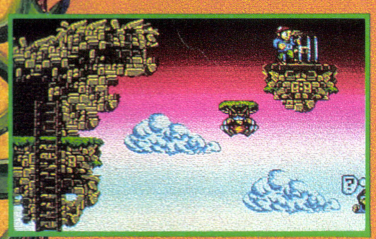
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The strangest things happen in fairy tales—but nothing so strange as the experiences you will encounter in your travels as Cornelius the Elf. Your true love, Elisa, has been Abducted by Necrilous the Not Very Nice, and imprisoned in his dark and formidable castle. To reach her, you must traverse enchanted woods, underground mines, jungle swamps and snowcapped peaks, where bizarre, villainous creatures and devious puzzles will test your mettle every step of the way!

FOR THE AMIGA AND IBM PC







Screen shots shown are from the Amiga version of the game.

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San Jose, CA 95131

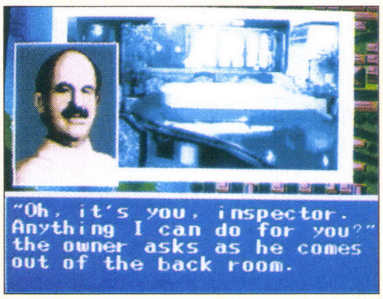
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The name of the game

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undoubtedly show the gaming community how seriously the industry takes the concept of CD games. The benefits are large: giant games with lots of lavish graphics and realistic digitized sound on a cheap-to-duplicate—yet nearly impossible-to-pirate—format, but, of course, the market still has to be seeded with hardware before the software will proliferate.



The beacon that's showing the way to go is NEC, with its TurboGrafx-CD Player for the TG-16. Though the CD releases have been sparse, *JB Harold Murder Club* (NEC for the TG-16) shows the potential for CD games. It's a murder-mystery that lets the player view through a detective's eyes and guide the private eye in solving the case. Surely, this isn't the end-all, be-all of CD games, but very few have taken this type of chance. It cuts a new path in video games.

Honorable Mention

There are very few platforms that Maxis' *SimCity* hasn't appeared on, and the year that sees no new *SimCity* will indeed be the one that sees no honoring of it in the VG&CE Best of's. However, in 1991 we saw a version of the classic unleashed on the SNES market by Nintendo. Certainly some things were changed in it, but most would agree that the end result is a better game. A smoother operating interface that employed the use of a character that interjected helpful tips and advice on how to plan your city added to the ease of the game.

Another computer game that made its way to a cartridge is a *Tetris* mutation called *Blockout* (Electronic Arts for the Genesis, Atari for the Lynx). Imagine playing *Tetris* by looking directly into a pit and you'll only get the basic idea. From there, you have to rotate pieces on three axes, visualizing the depth of the pit as well. The Lynx version is particularly exciting, capturing all the nuances of its predecessors in portable form.



Best Military-Strategy Video Game

Yet another in a series of PC-to-Genesis translations, *Centurion* (Electronic Arts for the Genesis) gave video-game warriors a smorgasbord of strategy/war gaming with plenty of arcade sequences, superb graphics and sound effects on the side.

Honorable Mention

With a very strong emphasis on strategy, *Warrior of Rome* (Micronet/Bignet for the Genesis) offered gamers countless hours of compelling play. Each scenario takes place on a grid divided into hundreds of squares with different types of terrain. *Warrior of Rome* is solid, lengthy and easy to play, and it serves as a great introduction to the genre.

Best Action-Strategy Video Game

It's a strategy! It's an arcade action game! It's a strategy! It's an arcade action game!

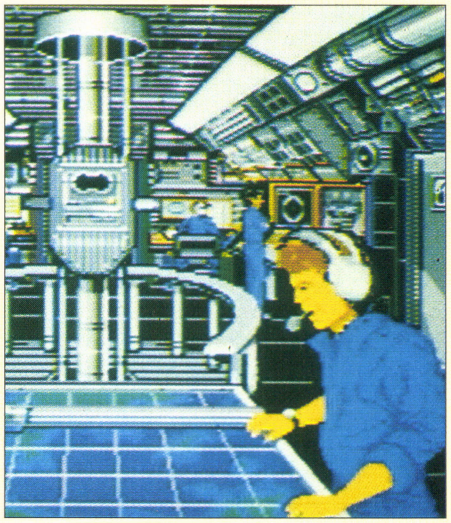
Hey, there's no need to argue over *ActRaiser* (Enix for the SNES), because it's a strategy *and* an arcade action



game! One half of the game is a blend of *Populous* and *SimCity* where you build various lands by defeating evil creatures. The other section of the game is scrolling combat that pits you against all forms of beast. Combined, *ActRaiser* is one of the most innovative cartridges we've seen for awhile. It has made us more anxious to see *Dungeon Master* on the SNES.

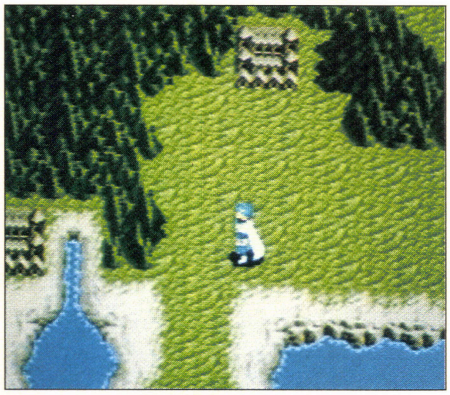
Honorable Mention

In a strange twist, Electronic Arts licensed its involving computer strategy, *688 Attack Sub*, to Sega for release on the Genesis, and it turned out to be one of the neatest games to hit the cartridge market. Combat by submarine has been done before successfully, but *688* puts all aspects of the sub in your hands. This game isn't for the claustrophobic.



It's a great Cinderella story: A computer programmer in northern California goes fanatic over a game system, successfully licenses and translates a

pair of big-name Japanese games and lets them loose on the industry—to rave reviews. Though Working Designs' version of *Cadash* didn't make the dates to be considered for VG&CE's 1991 awards, its *Parasol Stars* (Working Designs for the TG-16) did beat the cutoff. The third installment in the *Bubble Bobble* series, *Parasol Stars* takes Bubby and Bobby on further adventures with colorful backgrounds, a varied selection of characters and lots of hidden bonuses. Above all, though, it gives the player some interesting situations to get out of. We expect more in the future from this fledgling game publisher.



Best Adventure Video Game

In last year's accounting of the best games of 1990, we split this prize between Sega's *Phantasy Star II* (for the Genesis) and NEC's *Ys—Book I and II* (for the TG-16). Seeing that NEC's next chapter in the *Ys* saga, *Wanderers From Ys*, wasn't released in time for 1991 consideration, Sega did bring another *Phantasy Star* to the Genesis market—with great success. Bringing together a bunch of different adventures into one cart, *PSIII* offers hours of enjoyment and adventuring for the avid gamer. This is one of those games that will have you looking at the clock at three in the morning and wondering where the time went. It's crammed with oodles of lush graphics, and it immerses the player in its story. Of course, next year will probably bring another battle between NEC and Sega, with a little *Zelda III* mixed in....

Honorable Mention

Actually, Sega had a great one-two punch in the Adventure genre with *Phantasy Star III* and *Sword of Vermilion* (for the Genesis). In the tradition of its predecessors, *Phantasy Star III* contains innumerable plot twists and assorted surprises, coupled with countless combat sequences to enthrall RPG gamers.

Sword of Vermilion elements create an atmosphere that make it vanish as a game and, instead, transform into a living world of enchantment.

Best Sound in a Video Game

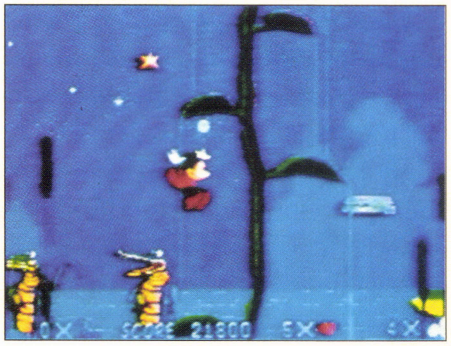
It's not odd that an SNES game would take the cake in this category, thanks to the muscular audio chip that is built into the console. With that in mind, the champion is the one that flexes that muscle and wrings out all it can muster. *ActRaiser* (Enix for the SNES) does that with wonderful, orchestral themes and sound effects. Enix could have left well enough alone with the game play that won it the Best Action/Strategy Video Game award, but it went the one step further by loading it up with fabulous audio, too.

Honorable Mention

Though most people are considering the Neo•Geo out of the budget of many gamers, its performance still can't be ignored. Though, unfortunately, many of the Neo•Geo's early titles didn't have great game play, one standout in the field is *Magician Lord* (SNK). It features some great video effects, but primarily offers the player a cornucopia of beautiful sound. It must be heard through headphones to be fully appreciated.

The old saying, "Good things come in small packages" was never as true as it is with *Klax* (Atari for the Lynx). This challenging strategy game pumps out a slew of sound effects—falling tiles cause clanks, but you'll also hear cheers, groans and oohs—that seem to be too much for such a tiny device. Believe it.

(Before VG&CE takes any heat for awarding *Klax* an award in 1991, when the Lynx version was listed in the 1990 awards, we'll take the opportunity to correct ourselves a year later. The Lynx version wasn't released until 1991. So there.)



Best Graphics in a Video Game

Though Electronic Arts has taken a big share of the awards, Mickey Mouse himself isn't too far behind. Though his *Castle of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse* was awarded an Honorable Mention in the Video Game of the Year category, we can't ignore his second game of the year, *Fantasia* (Sega for the Genesis), for its posh images. Disney has built its reputation on smooth and colorful animations, and Sega is doing its best to capture that in silicon. And Mickey doesn't look 50 either.

Honorable Mention

Sega's *Shadow Dancer* proved to be a graphics surprise, giving *Revenge of Shinobi* a run for the money. *Shadow Dancer*'s spectacular graphics included breathtaking earthquakes that split the screen in half, creatures that emerged from brickwork and an array of multilevel parallax scrolling.

Battletoads. Just the mere mention of the word brings a goofy smile to any-

one's face. If you've played Tradewest's NES game, you have more reason to smile, because you know that there's more to this one than a gimmick. The game consists of a batch of toad heroes in a scrolling action game, but the best parts of *Battletoads* are the very cartoonlike visuals. This isn't just an enjoyable and challenging game to play; it's fun to look at, too. That's a strong argument that 8-bit gaming isn't dead.

Best Coin-Op to Video Game Translation

These days, "translation" is a delicate term. There are some games, namely Neo•Geo titles, that aren't so much translations as they are arcade games in a home cartridge. The game you get at your local store for your Neo•Geo is virtually the same you'll see at the arcade. For that reason, sadly, we can't really consider Neo•Geo software for this category. However, there are tons of other games that really are conversions, and usually the task is to cram all the nuances of the coin-op into the memory constraints of a teensy-tiny cartridge.

One that caught us by surprise is *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II—The Arcade Game* (Ultra for the NES), which captured the spirit of the best-selling coin-op. When *TMNT I* came out, lots of gamers were disappointed that it didn't match the arcade version; but Ultra didn't let anyone down with the second NES cart. It captures the combat action succinctly.

Honorable Mention

A somewhat overlooked coin-op was Atari's *A.P.B.*, a satirical game of cat and mouse...err, cops and robbers. In it, you, the local constable, have to traverse the roads of your town in search of ne'er-do-wells: drunks, speeders, litterbugs and, mainly, *A.P.B.*'s major criminals, who have to be run off the road. What's amazing is that Atari shoehorned the whole theme of the arcade version into a Lynx card. Hard to believe, but thoroughly enjoyable—and remarkably portable.

Another Atari quarter-sucker, *Cyberball*, is making its way across the video-game community. Soon to hit the Lynx, Sega's Genesis version of *Cyberball* is a tasty game of football, though it's gridiron action of the future—between robots. Mostly faithful to the game we know and love, but adds some excitement through a varied playbook and some different rules. It's a nice touch for the electronic-sports fan.

Most Innovative Video Game

It's sad to say, but there are few companies leading the video-game industry down new paths. Many of the games that come out today are fairly formula: scrolling run-and-jump, run-and-punch or run-and-kick types of games. Oh, to dream of the Atari days of old, with games like *Missile Command*, *Tempest* and *Food Fight*. Not many are willing to take a chance at innovation, but this category is VG&CE's recognition of those games on the cutting edge.

Though it's hard to call an arcade game "innovative" a few years after it was released, we're going to risk the complaints and toss an award to *A.P.B.* (Atari for the Lynx). As we noted, not too many companies are looking past the scroll-boss format, and it's nice to see Atari taking chances with titles that the current crop of gamers may not be familiar with. Making an overhead driving game is simple, but it requires some imagination and thought to take that concept and make it fresh. And the laughs that *A.P.B.* will draw out of you with its visuals and sound bites are more than worth it.

Honorable Mention

Our December cover story, *Joe Montana II Sportstalk Football* (Sega for the Genesis), just snuck under the deadline for 1991, but it would be a shame not to recognize it for the chances it took. As we write this, *Montana II* is the talk of the neighborhood—it's not only a good football game, but it "tells" the player what is going on. It's a lot of fun to have an announcer built into the game, and it's an idea that could have fallen on its face. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, is what we have to say.

Similar to Atari's *A.P.B.*, Camerica could have created a simple overhead driving game with little effort—and probably little fanfare. However, it chose to go a different route with *Micro Machines* (for the NES). It took a popular toy license and wrapped a driving game around it, as if the diminutive vehicles were the actual participants. With that in mind, you get a wonderfully controllable driving game that has you cruising along on the pool table (don't fall in the pockets), over the breakfast table (watch out for the puddles of milk) and with boats on the bathwater (complete with rubber ducks and floating soap). Once you pick up the control pad, it's certainly hard to put it down.

BEST COMPUTER GAMES OF THE YEAR

Computer Game of the Year

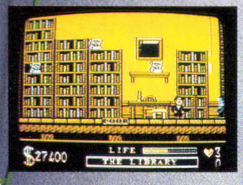
No decision was harder for the panel of judges than picking the top new computer game of 1991. There have never been so many superb titles of ap-

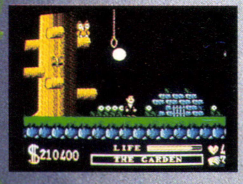


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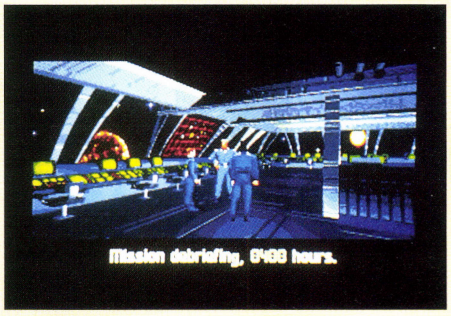
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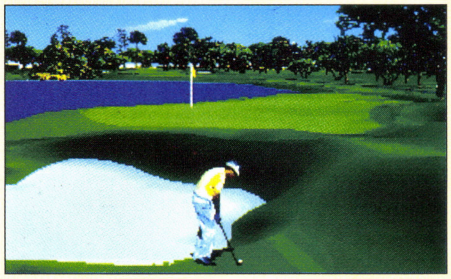
The VG&CE critics' choice as Computer Game of the Year is *Wing Commander II* (Origin Systems for the IBM PC). It has relentless first-person combat action and rivetting noninteractive scenes in one slick, science-fiction package. Those with the hardware power to install the speech disks, available separately, can enjoy the most effective, dramatic cut scenes ever included in a computer game. The animation and artwork are memorable, but the addition of full speech lifts the canned interludes to new heights and levels of sophistication.

Even the best noninteractive sequences are worthless if the interactive portions aren't up to snuff. In this case, space war fans won't be disappointed by the variety of enemies, the range of tactical situations or the audiovisual representation of fighting in space. And when you've tried all of the assignments in the basic program, Origin has a set of mission disks that provide new worlds and goals for the would-be space hero or heroine.

Best Sports Simulation Computer Game

The slogan for the year was "back to basics!" The sports that have always proven popular with home computerists rode high; baseball, football and golf dominated the new release list.

Will this year's winners supplant current mainstays like *Earl Weaver*, *Jack Nicklaus*, *MicroLeague Baseball* and *TV Sports: Basketball*? The verdict isn't in yet. Simulation sports fans are notoriously loyal to the games they play, and it isn't easy to get a stat baseball league to embrace a new program. On the other hand, these titles are crammed with features, including sound and graphics even the arcade sports titles didn't have as recently as two years ago.



Latest in a distinguished line of award-winning computer golf simulations is *LINKS The Challenge of Golf* (Access Software for the IBM PC). A superb play-mechanic combines with near-flawless visuals to produce a true-to-life simulation of golf. Access is supporting *LINKS* with a large selection of course disks and a free newsletter.

Honorable Mention

MicroLeague Football: The Coaches' Challenge (MLSA for the IBM PC) is the state-of-the-art pigskin simulation for those who want full-screen animated graphics as well as accurate mathematical modeling of simulated players.

Tony La Russa Baseball (SSI for the Amiga and IBM PC) was one of last summer's most pleasant surprises for sports gamers. Solid sound and graphics lend excitement to a simulation that offers the user action-strategy and stat-only options.

Best Sports Action/Action-Strategy Computer Game

As sometimes happens when publishers produce an unusual number of sports simulations, the all-out action sports titles were a little rarer than



usual last year. There were still plenty of good ones, many of which benefited from the faster execution speed of the 386SX IBM PC machines.

Six official NASCAR courses push drivers to the limit in *Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge* (Konami for the Amiga, IBM PC and Macintosh). Bitmapped graphics and excellent use of scaling technology give this auto-race game from Distinctive Software (creators of *Test Drive)* that elusive combination of high-speed animation and sensational graphics needed to visually simulate this sport.

A VCR-like replay feature allows the gamer to see crucial points in each race from six different camera positions. Also highly impressive is the lengthy and detailed pit-stop sequence with seven maintenance options.

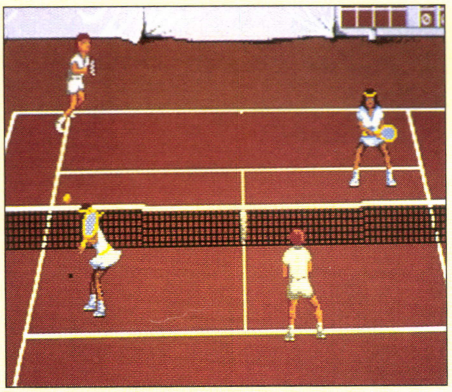
Bill Elliott's NASCAR Challenge is more than an audiovisual triumph. Players select the engine and customize other performance features to suit the rigors of each course, then prove their skill against some of auto racing's top drivers, including Bill Elliott himself.



Honorable Mention

4-D Boxing (Electronic Arts for the IBM PC) is the most controversial

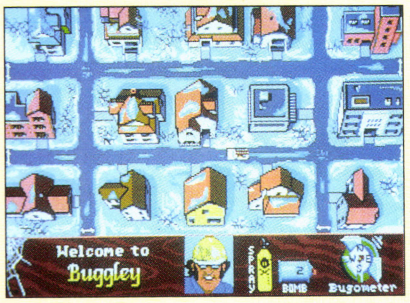
sports game published in 1991. Critical opinion is sharply divided about the use of polygon-fill graphics for human figures. Some gamers loathe the look, but even more think it's the most exciting way ever invented to present an action-packed boxing bout.



Pro Tennis Tour 2 (UBI Soft for the Amiga and IBM PC) simulates big-time tennis in an attractive, highly playable format. It narrowly beat out several net rivals for an Honorable Mention, with excellent command control, authentic ambience and ease of operation.

Best Action Computer Game

The decline of the pure-action computer game, noted in VG&CE's February 1991 "Best of the Year" analysis, gathered momentum during the last 12 months. Cartridge games monopolize the market for reflex contests so effectively that software publishers shy away from the category.



The top 1991 action contest is *Arachnophobia* (Disney Software for the Amiga, Commodore 64 and IBM PC), one of the most entertaining movie-to-computer licenses ever produced. Bluesky Software, the development house, captured the mood of the film to perfection.

The player battles the spider invasion from cities and towns all the way to the jungles of the Amazon. The IBM PC version is especially welcome, since there have been few outstanding arcade games for that system. This side-perspective, hand-eye test is great looking, too. Some of the attacking spiders are positively creepy!

Honorable Mention

RoboCop 2 (Data East for the Amiga and IBM PC) revises the classic side-scrolling video-game format to meet the needs of the computer-gaming environment. The crook-catching cyborg must complete three missions which, together, present RoboCop's quest to stop the nefarious Cain.

Best Science-Fiction/Fantasy Computer Game

Public demand has enlarged this important category, introduced last year, to include fantasy as well as science fiction. That makes a tough decision for the judges even harder. Two-thirds of all computer games have at least a nominal connection with sci-fi or fantasy, so there's no shortage of worthy candidates for this honor.



Universal admiration for J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* has inspired dozens of nonelectronic and electronic games. The best one yet comes from those masters of adventure at Interplay Productions, *The Lord of the Rings, Volume 1* (Interplay Productions for the Amiga and IBM PC). Players fight Sauron and guard the One True Ring from the Dark Lord's minions while journeying through 9,000 screens of Middle Earth! It follows the sweep of the first book in the trilogy, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, without forcing gamers to duplicate the events of the novel.

The top-down, full-screen VGA graphics are among the year's best, and the full musical score and digital sound effects make the audio just as special. The second game is already in preparation, and true fantasy fans will be waiting at the stores to buy it.



Honorable Mention

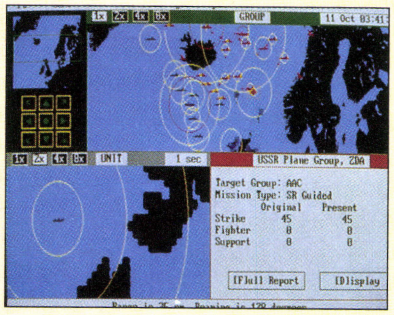
The best sci-fi computer game of the year, and a close second to the overall winner in this category, is *Rise of the Dragon* (Sierra On-Line for the IBM PC). This futuristic detective adventure, with overtones of *Blade Runner*, features an intelligent interface that presents the right cursor for every situation. Outstanding graphics propel the player into the heart of a sometimes-frightening world of tomorrow.

Best Simulation Computer Game

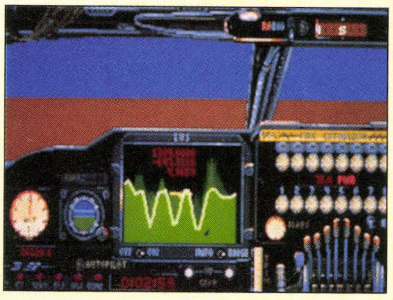
Simulators continue to fascinate computerists seeking vicarious thrills denied them in real life. They often boast the real-time excitement of an arcade game, but with the nuance and

strategy typical of the more cerebral contests.

Ground and air simulators have dominated this award since its inception, but this year's champion, *Harpoon* (Three-Sixty Pacific for the IBM PC), takes the player to sea at the helm of a missile ship. This simulator has drawn favorable responses from naval officers with harpoon training, so what more needs to be said about its accuracy and detail?

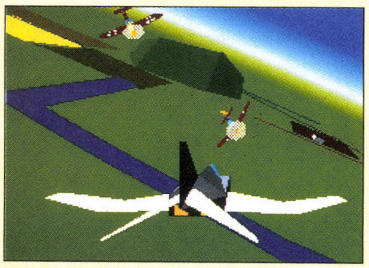


The greatness of *Harpoon*'s design is that it gives the essence of the experience without swamping the player with a mass of boring details that add little or nothing to the experience. Three-Sixty could have packed even more information into *Harpoon*, but only at a great loss in playability. No one will ever accuse this of being a simple game, but *Harpoon* plays surprisingly fluidly, considering the complex situation it simulates. Scenario disks, available for separate purchase, extend the playlife of this absorbing and authentic simulator.



Honorable Mention

There were several excellent flight simulators published in 1991, but *Megafortress* (Three-Sixty Pacific for the IBM PC) is the only one that expands the traditional flight simulator experience. The core simulator of a World War II bomber is very good, but it's the dramatic staging and cinematic graphics techniques that make *Megafortress* so exciting.



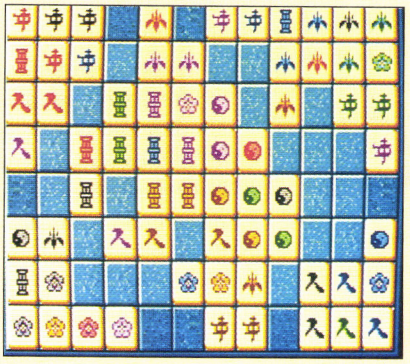
Chuck Yeager's Advanced Combat Trainer (Electronic Arts for the IBM PC) rates an Honorable Mention as 1991's outstanding flight simulator, despite plenty of competition. EA's developers continue to refine the original *Chuck Yeager* systems, producing games with successively better audiovisual effects. Not only does the combat simulator look great, but the choice of possible missions is one of the widest around.

Best Strategy Computer Game

The computer-software industry's first reaction to the video-game boom was to flood the market with fast-action computer games. Last year came the revelation that computerists don't necessarily want the same type of action on an IBM that gamers might want on a Genesis.

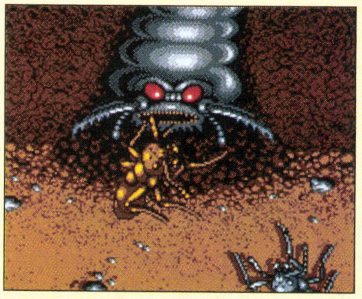
Add in the success of strategy titles like *SimCity*, and the result is a strategy game boom! The more leisurely pace of play is well-suited to solitaire gaming, and strategy games are able to capitalize on the superior degree of control possible with the keyboard.

Shanghai II (Activision for the IBM PC) builds enjoyably on the one-time "Best Game of the Year" with additional features such as multiple playfields. The sequel is every bit as pleasurable to play as the original, and that's enough to earn it the victor's laurels. Among the most appealing new features is the choice of playfields. Just when the computer strategist starts getting cocky about the original, dragon-themed layout, a switch to an alternative is just the thing to kick the challenge factor right back up there where it belongs!



Honorable Mention

Ishido (Accolade for the IBM PC and Macintosh) was originally produced in a limited edition at a premium price, but Accolade has made it possible for all computer gamers to stretch their brains with this contemplative strategy game. Matching tile symbols in this distant cousin of *Shanghai* can make hours melt like morning dew.



SimAnt (Maxis for the IBM PC and Macintosh) shows clearly that sequels don't necessarily have to be more grandiose than the original. After *SimCity* and *SimEarth*, some folks expected Maxis to market a program that put players in charge of a universe—or at least a galaxy. Instead, *SimAnt*

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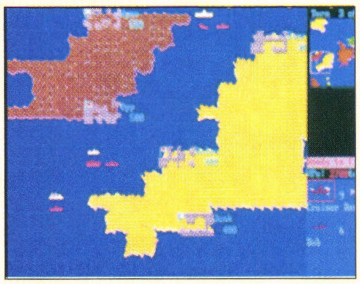
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Best Military-Strategy Computer Game

Several designers have tried to break away from the traditions set in concrete by nonelectronic military games. *Lords of the Rising Sun* and *Universal Military Simulator* are examples of war games without the usual hex-grid map, square trooper counters and other trappings familiar to players of Avalon Hill, Game Designers Workshop and SPI.



The Lost Admiral (Quantum Quality Productions for the IBM PC) is the first title from this emerging publisher, but that didn't keep this grand strategic war game from sailing away with the top prize. A high degree of replayability and one of the strongest solitaire modules of any military simulation helps *The Lost Admiral* overcome the handicap of utilitarian graphics.

Players spend "buy points" to construct a mix of nine ship types, and there's no ideal combination of forces for every contingency. The naval strategist must use the special capabilities of each craft to orchestrate a winning plan. *The Lost Admiral* offers ten levels of difficulty and tracks the player's progress from Seaman First Class to Admiral of the Fleet.

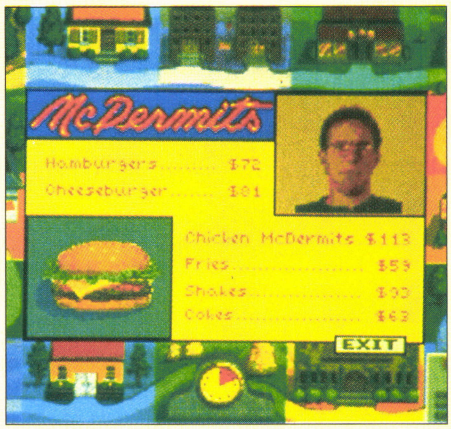
The Lost Admiral may not please the hex-grid gamers as much as it will fans of *Risk* and *Empire*, but this intelligent and deep simulation is a fresh breeze that pushes the long-stagnant naval war game category out of its longstanding doldrums.

Honorable Mention

Innovation isn't everything, and an outstanding traditional war game like *Second Front* (SSI for the Amiga and IBM PC) shows that there's still an important place for the hex-grid map and square unit counters. Gary Grigsby's detailed rendition of World War II's Eastern Front starts each player with over 150 divisions. The sweep of battle is awesome in this military simulation that belongs in every armchair general's collection.

Best Computerized Board Game

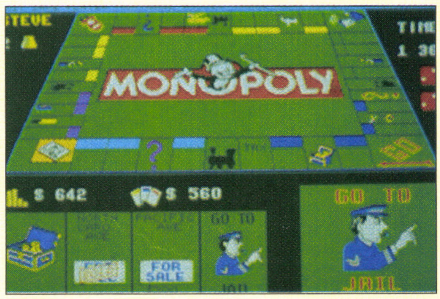
Nonelectronic board games like Monopoly, Stratego and Clue have achieved considerable success with computerized editions, and no one knows how many systems electronic chess has sold. Now a new trend that is sure to delight fans of this type of family-social strategy contest may be starting.



One to four human or robot players endure the crises of life in *Jones in the Fast Lane* (Sierra On-Line for the IBM PC), designed by Kelly Walker, Meredith Christopher and Robert Walker.

The angled overhead perspective playfield confronts players with many of life's major (and minor) choices. Should you go to school or get a job? Should you save time with processed foods or cook a wholesome meal from scratch.

Like all the top computer-board games, *Jones in the Fast Lane* offers features that a paper game can't match. Its pop-up data windows and VGA graphics give it maximum eye-appeal.

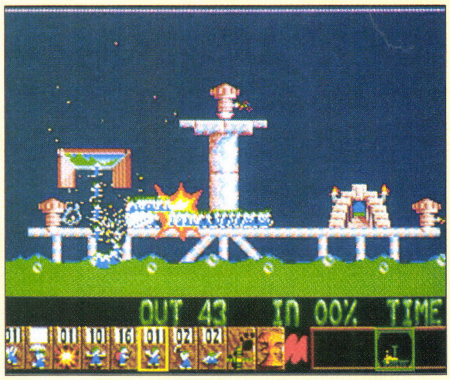


Honorable Mention

Monopoly (Virgin Games for the Amiga, Atari ST, Commodore 64 and IBM PC) is the best of many attempts to transfer the Parker Brothers classic to the electronic-gaming environment. This multiplayer game has both an excellent overview of the board and a well-animated close-up of the active player's current position.

Best Action/Strategy Computer Game

No type of game has gained more enthusiastic acceptance among computerists than action-strategy contests. They are the computer-gaming equivalent of video-game shoot-'em-ups, but with the kind of depth and strategic



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scope that older, more sophisticated electronic gamers want. They tease the brain like a strategy contest and tax the reflexes like an arcade game.

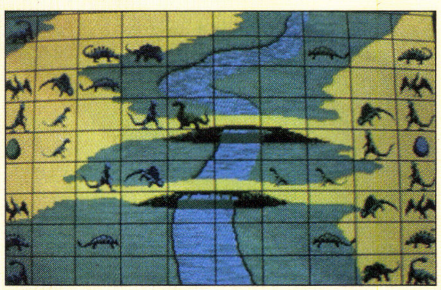
Lemmings (Psygnosis for the Amiga and IBM PC) features a remarkable concept implemented with cheery music and simple, evocative artwork. The publisher is famous for frenetic shooters, but *Lemmings* is cast in a different, more cerebral mold.

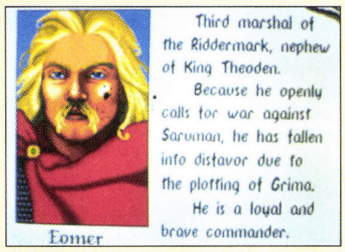
The line of lemmings that wends its way across the side-perspective playfield stops for no one. All the player can do is assign special characteristics to individual lemmings. The creatures use these abilities to negate dangers that would otherwise prevent them from crossing the entire playfield to safety. For example, the lemmings can build a bridge over a chasm or tunnel through an otherwise very impenetrable obstacle.

The virtual impossibility of getting *all* the lemmings through this ordeal safely creates the strategic problems. The player knows that some of the critters must be sacrificed, but losing too many makes it impossible to achieve victory. The charming drawings give the player that necessary sense of loss when they scamper over a cliff instead of reaching the exit. Its excellent replayability aside, this computer game cries out for a sequel.

Honorable Mention

Dino Wars (Digitek for the Amiga and IBM PC) took a long time to bring to market, but there's little question that it is this publisher's best computer game to date. Prehistoric pandemonium reigns, as the mighty lizards we know from museum tours roar to life and battle savagely. There's also a lot of solid information about dinosaurs, but the ferocious fights help players swallow this educational medicine without complaint.





Riders of Rohan (Konami for the IBM PC) is an arcade adventure of the type made famous by the late, lamented Cinemaware. Tolkien fans will enjoy the duel, archery and magic combat as they ride against the renegade wizard Saruman. Players conduct mass battles and one-to-one showdowns with user-friendly keyboard or mouse control. Konami rescued this game from potential oblivion when the original publisher exited the game business, and Middle Earth lovers will be eternally grateful.

Best Adventure/Role-Playing Computer Game

Like a novice bicycle rider who is scared to leave the training wheels behind, a few publishers still cling to the outmoded "interactive fiction" technology. They continue to produce parser-driven adventures that rely more on an ability to guess the word that triggers a response than a flair for deductive reasoning.

Fortunately, most game makers have advanced to sophisticated interfaces that use icons, menus and point-and-click systems. All are easier to learn and permit smoother play than the parser, with its extremely laborious typing.

By contrast, electronic role-playing games (RPGs) have stuck close to the



tried-and-true computer RPG play-system, derived from TSR's nonelectronic Dungeons & Dragons and perfected for the computer by Andrew Greenberg and Robert Woodhead's *Wizardry*. Quite a few of 1991's RPGs tried to redefine the interface, keeping some familiar elements while introducing keyboard-free control and interactive graphics. The D&D roots are still visible, but developers are progressing toward role-playing games with mass-market appeal.

Eye of the Beholder (Strategic Simulations for the Amiga and IBM PC), the Best Adventure/RPG of the Year, demonstrates the evolution of the category. It doesn't break completely with the past, but developer Westwood Associates has completely updated and refined the interface, heavied up on the audiovisual effects and revamped the main display.

Something sinister is brewing in the sewers beneath the town of Waterdeep, and it's the player's mission to go down into the dank depths and stop the evil conspiracy. The gamer controls four player characters, plus two nonplayer characters (NPCs) with a point-and-click control scheme that keeps the focus on the world instead of the rules. Like almost all role-playing games, *Eye of the Beholder* offers a variety of character classes, sentient races and special talents.

Eye of the Beholder is the best title in SSI's *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* line. Another chapter of the *Legends* saga is already in stores.

Honorable Mention

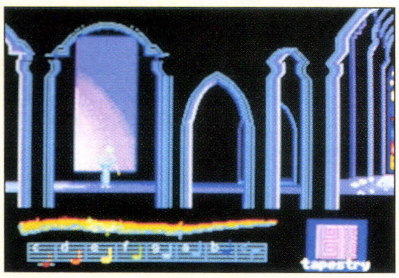
Police Quest III (Sierra On-Line for the IBM PC and Macintosh) is the latest and best adventure from the pen of Jim Walls, law enforcer turned game designer. The Death Angel is back in business, and it's up to the player to track down the perpetrator of a grisly ritual murder. Great cinematic scenes, an identikit module that's a game in itself and authentic insight into police work are among this mystery's bragging points.



Martian Memorandum (Access Software for the Amiga and IBM PC) chronicles another case from the files of near-future sleuth Tex Murphy. It combines a first-person simulator with icon-driven adventuring to create a science-fiction masterpiece that tests both brain cells and finger muscles. The sound and graphics rate with gaming's best, so this is surely one of 1991's "must-buy" disks.

Best Sound in a Computer Game

The rise of the IBM PC had the short-term effect of reducing the use of sound and music in computer games. Gamers' anguished cries encouraged the development of a wide selection of sound boards. New ones like Ad Lib Gold and Sound Blaster II have done for music, effects and speech what VGA did for graphics. Sound has become one of the five major components of game design, along with graphics, theme, play-mechanics and interface.



Loom (Lucasfilm for the Amiga and IBM PC), an interactive fantasy adventure, makes imaginative use of sound. Succeeding brilliantly where the murky *Dolphin's Rune* failed, by integrating music into the play of the game, *Loom* is built around magical music phrases. Bobbin, the hero bard, sings the spells to work wonders in this breathtaking interactive-graphics fantasy adventure. The graphics are good enough to rate *Loom* consideration for an Honorable Mention in that category, so it's not surprising that it has very strongly influenced adventure design.

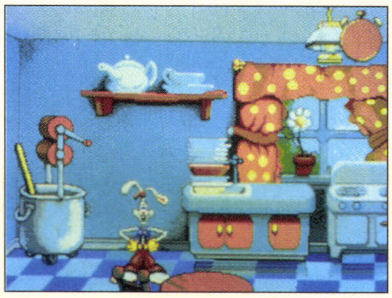
Best Graphics in a Computer Game

The visual presentation of home computer games took a major leap forward in the last 12 months. VGA graphics cards have achieved universal popularity, and the development houses have now geared up to exploit their enhanced visual capabilities.

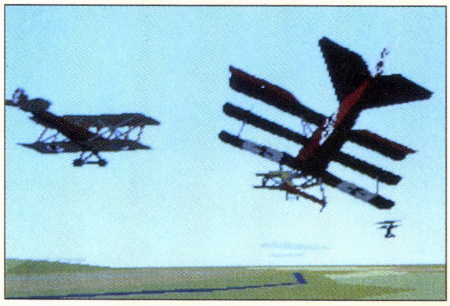
It was only a couple of years ago that computer artists became part of the implementation team on most computer-game projects. Now, it's common to find a whole team of artists working on a major title, each operating within a specialty such as modeling, animation, backgrounds or figure work.

Hare Raising Havoc (Disney Software for the IBM PC) was developed by Bluesky, also responsible for the superb *Arachnophobia*. This cartoon-inspired eye-popper is one of the year's genuine treats.

Roger Rabbit is baby-sitting Baby Herman when, of course, the little ham escapes. Roger must move through a series of archetypical cartoon scenarios



in order to solve the kinetic puzzles leading to the rescue of the stogie-chomping infant toon. The graphics are phenomenal, a virtually interactive cartoon with all the wild and crazy effects one expects in a Roger Rabbit animated feature or short subject.



Honorable Mention

Red Baron (Dynamix for the IBM PC) is the creation of Damon Slye, the designer of such all-time great games as *Sky Fox*, *Arctic Fox* and *Stellar 7*. This World War I dogfight simulator oozes class. Its strengths include user-friendly documentation, a simple interface and enough options to satisfy any sky jockey. The graphics will absolutely astonish even the most jaded gamers, and the flexibility of the program must impress even computerphobes.



Heart of China (Dynamix for the IBM PC) pulls gamers into its world of in-

continued on page 109

From World to World

A PLAYER'S GUIDE TO

Phantasy Star III

PART TWO

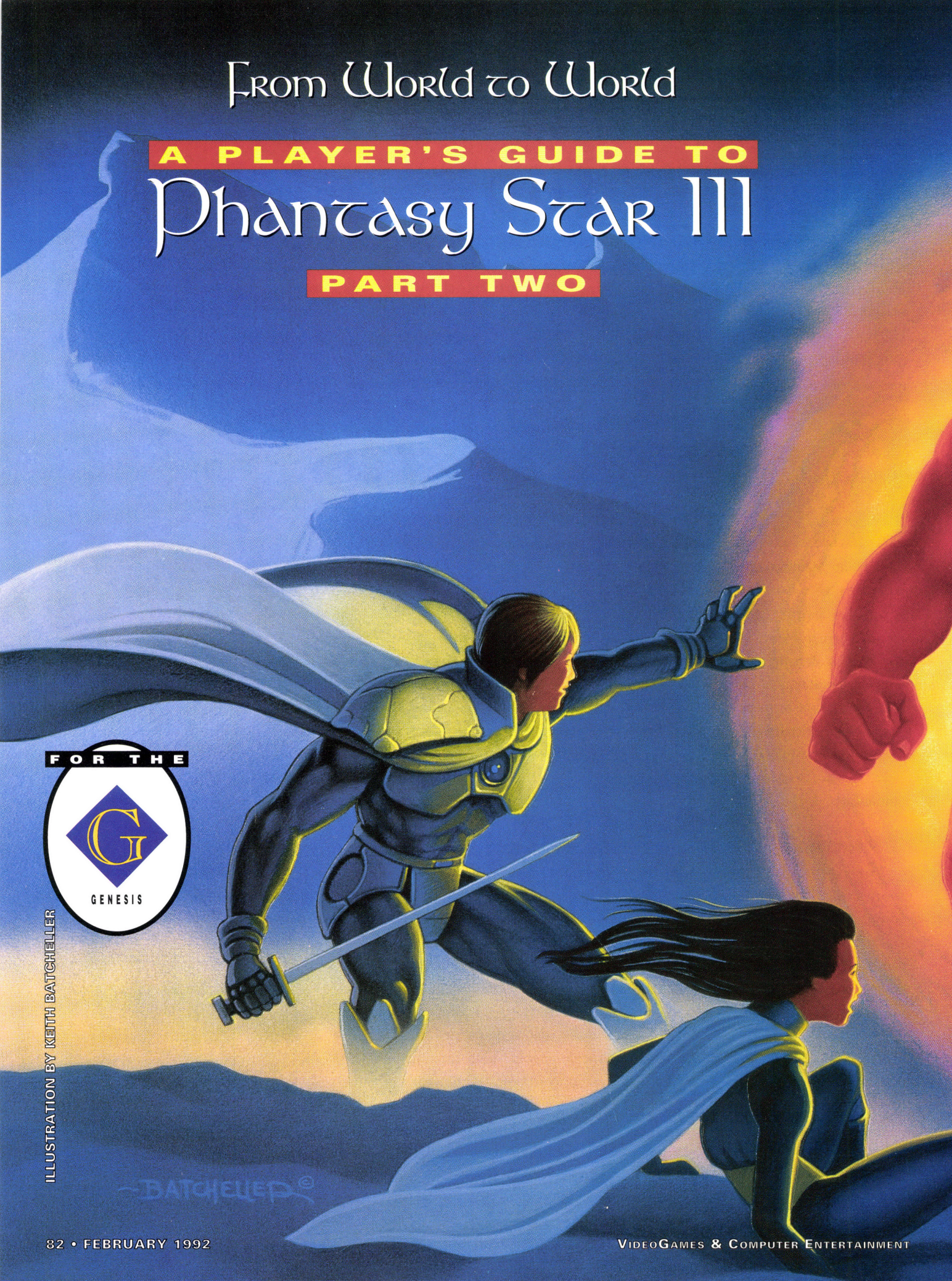
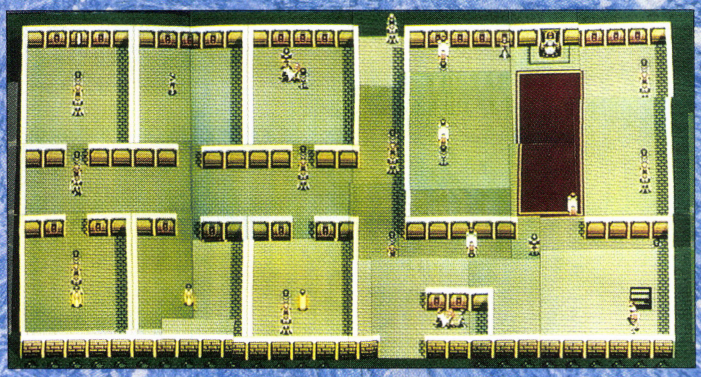


ILLUSTRATION BY KEITH BATCHELLER



Last month, we followed the adventures of Rhys and completed the first-generation quest of *Phantasy Star III*. This month, we take up our adventures after the marriage of Rhys and Lena, with their son, Nial, who has a major challenge to face: Find out who is responsible for the destruction of Satera, Lena's homeland. Nial's quest will take him to many strange and wonderful worlds, from the familiar Landen all the way to the depths of outer space. Turn the page and let the travels begin!

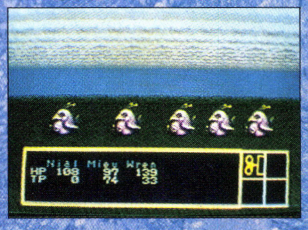
BY CLAYTON WALNUM



You start the second-generation quest inside Landen Castle.



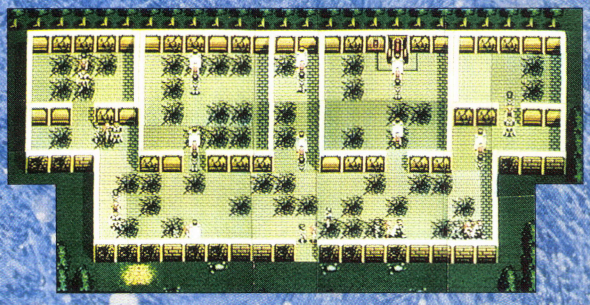
After you marry Lena, you have a son named Nial, who is your character for the second-generation quest.



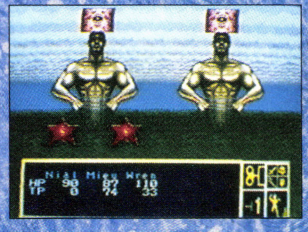
These warblers may look a lot like the weak chirpers, but they are much tougher.



Once over the bridge, head for Satera Castle.



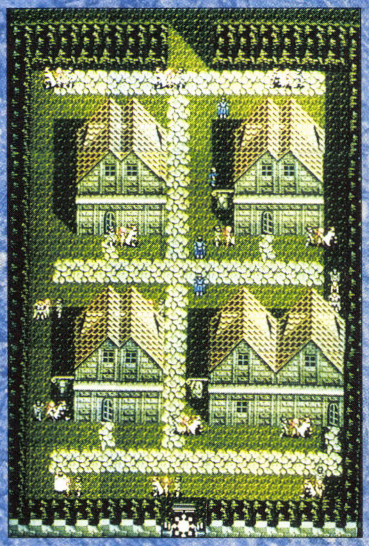
Satera Castle sure is in bad shape! A lone soldier here will tell you about a special cave.



The foes in Elysium don't take kindly to strangers.



In Elysium, find your way to Divisia, a town that is divided into two parts by its castle.



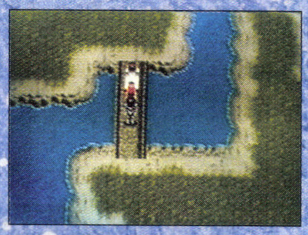
In North Divisia, regain your strength and talk to everyone. You'll learn that Lune's sister is being held captive in the castle. Could this be why Lune is so upset?



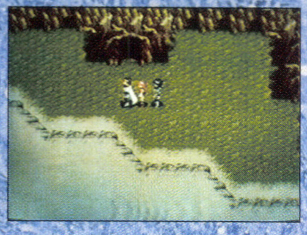
The first news of trouble comes while you're still in Landen Castle.



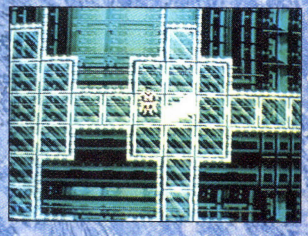
Outside Landen and Yaata, take some time to fight monsters and build up your experience.



This bridge will take you to your next destination.



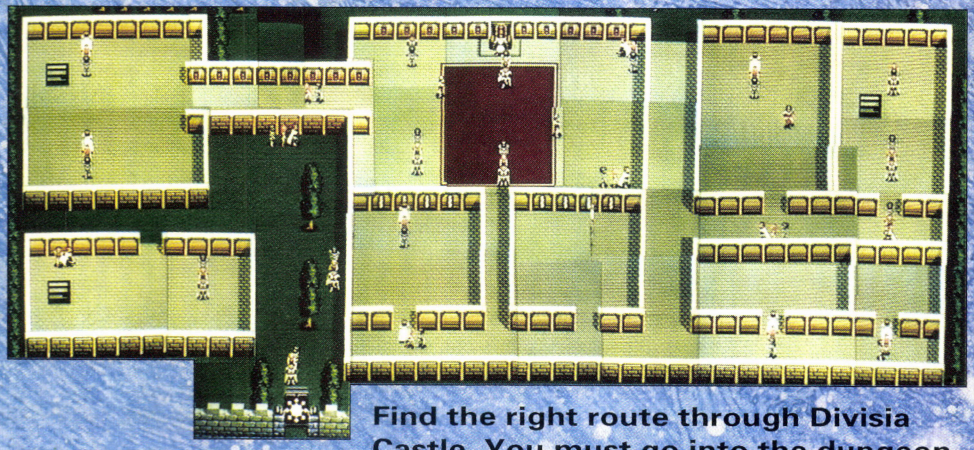
This cave, found to the southeast of Satera Castle, will take you to a world called Elysium.



Inside the cave, you have to find your way through the usual maze of platforms.



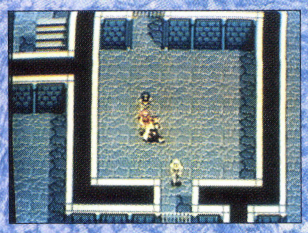
When you find the cave's exit, you emerge here in Elysium.



Find the right route through Divisia Castle. You must go into the dungeon and release Lune's sister. Then find the castle's southern gate.



Below the castle, you'll run into some savage foes.



Finally, after many battles and dead ends, you'll find Lune's sister.



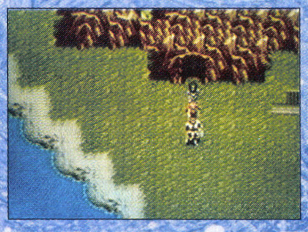
Lune's sister will be so glad to be free that she'll join your party.



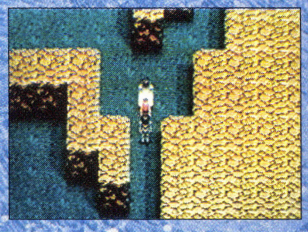
In South Divisia, you will learn about a dangerous rebel army.



You will be attacked by many strange creatures in this area.



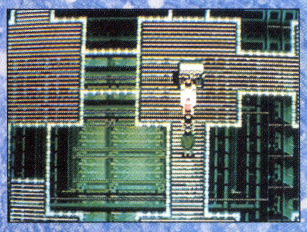
In the southwest, you'll find this cave.



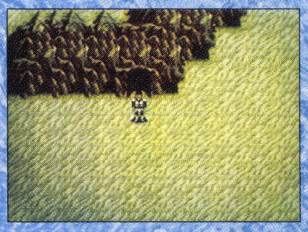
The corridors inside the cave can be confusing, and...



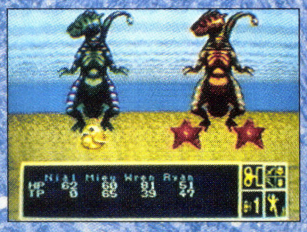
...you'll meet many frightening creatures, but...



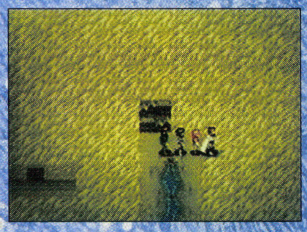
On your way through the maze, be sure to pick up the treasures.



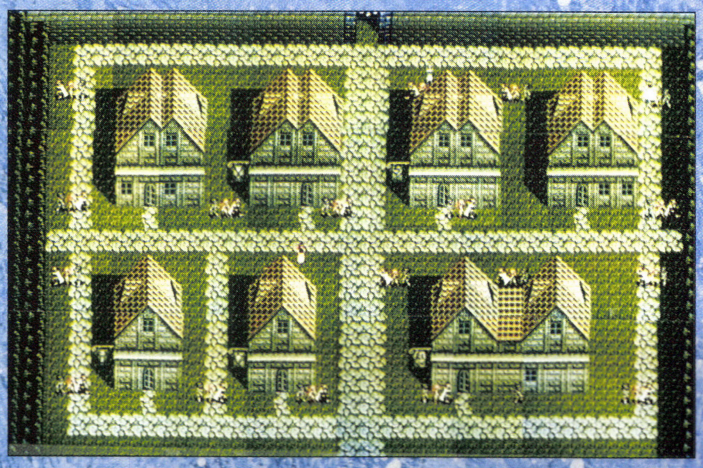
Once in Aridia, find the city of Hazatak.



The enemies have become fiercer since the last time you were in Aridia.



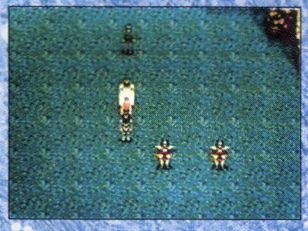
When you find the hidden entrance at the head of this river, Wren transforms into a submersible that you can use to get to Laya's world.



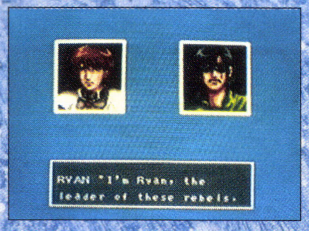
Use the shops in South Divisia to stock up on supplies. And, as always, talk to everyone.



South Divisia's southern gate leads back into the wilderness.



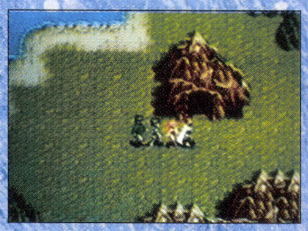
...you must persevere until you find the rebels.



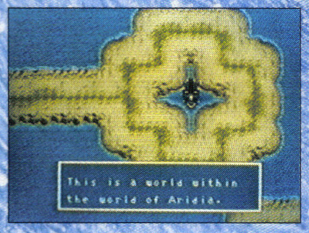
One of the rebels, Ryan, will join your quest.



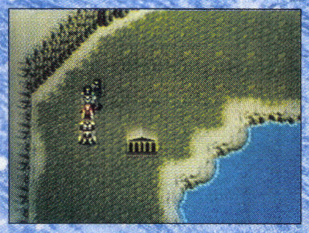
Make sure you pick up the Sub Parts before leaving the cave.



After talking to the rebels, you must find your way back to the desert world of Aridia.



You'll arrive here in Laya's world, after which...



...you should search for this temple.



Inside the temple, you'll learn more of Laya's story.



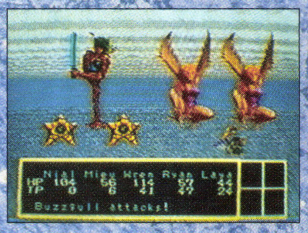
You'll also find Laya, who will join your quest.



Back in Aridia, find this cave that'll lead you to a new world.



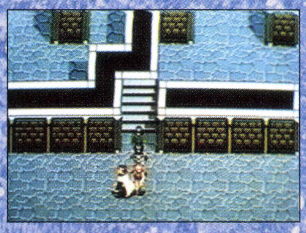
After exiting the cave, you'll find yourself in Frigidia...



...a place where you'll battle many strange creatures...



...before you find the town of Mystoke.



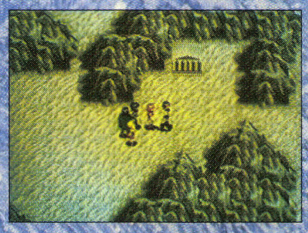
In the Mystoke Castle dungeons...



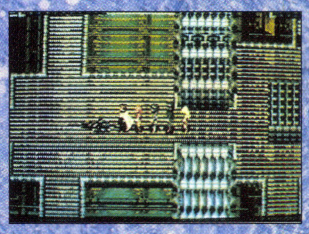
...be prepared to fight some tough enemies.



After a lot of searching, you'll find the Laya Pendant. Use the pendant to learn more about Orakio and Laya.



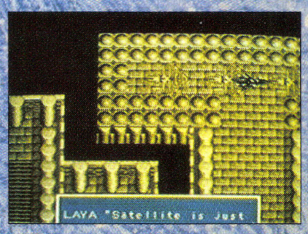
After using the pendant, you'll have the power to use the temple's transporters...



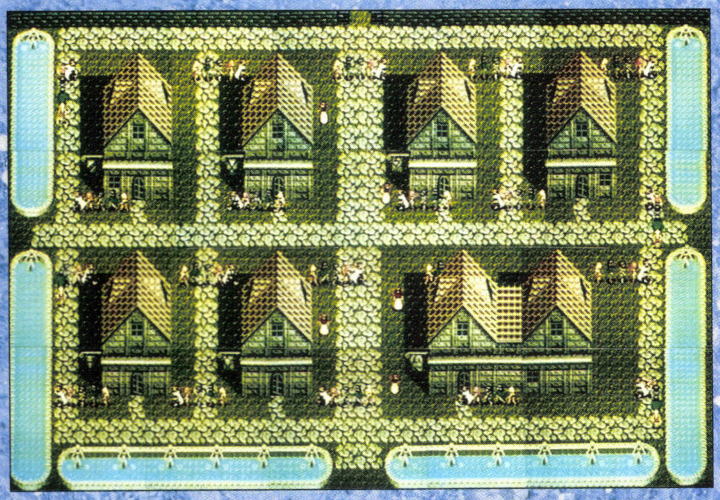
In the maze, you'll find the space shuttle...



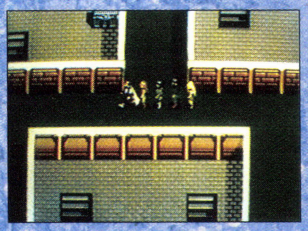
...which will take you into space, where you'll travel to a new satellite.



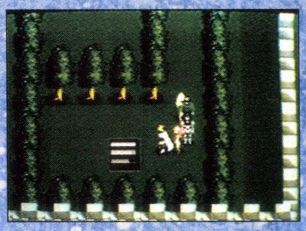
When you arrive on the satellite...



In Mystoke, recover from your travels, be sure to talk to everyone, then head for the castle, which you can enter through the northern town gate.



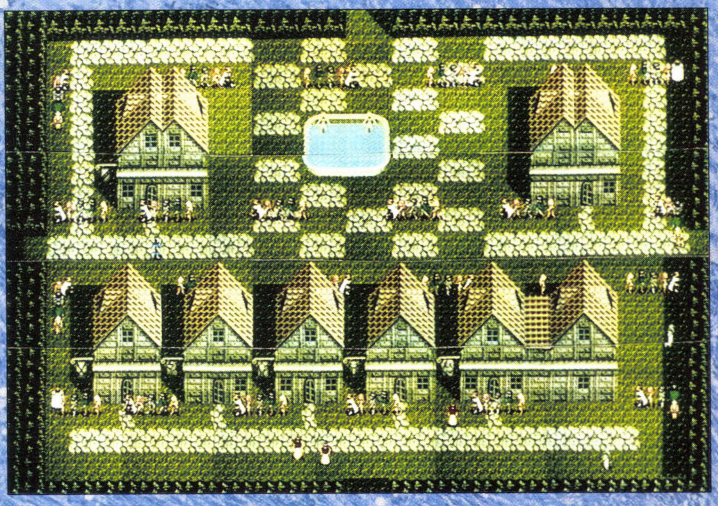
In the castle, search through the above- and below-ground maze to find the Laya Pendant.



This is the entrance to the below-ground maze.



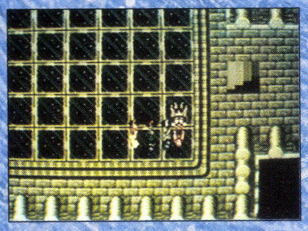
...to travel instantly to different worlds. You'll want to come here, to Aerone.



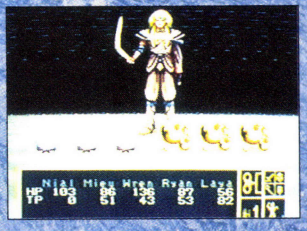
Aerone Village is the last town you'll visit in your second-generation quest.



In the village, you'll learn about a space shuttle and a secret entrance at the east end of the southernmost town path.



...look for this stairway, which will lead you to...

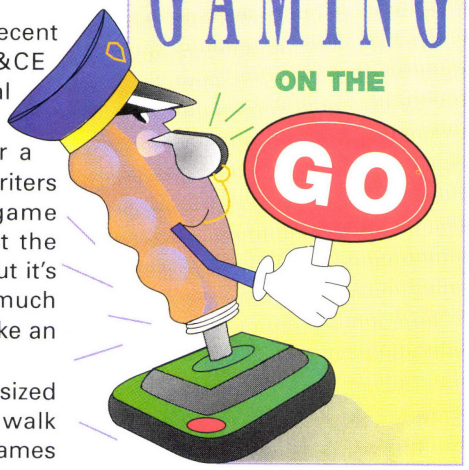


...a battle with Lune. Make sure your party members are at maximum strength before you take on Lune.



After Lune is defeated, it's time for another wedding. You must choose between Laya and Alair. Next month, we'll embark on the third-generation quest, after marrying Alair.

GAMING ON THE GO



by
Chris Bieniek

As Andy Eddy pointed out in a recent editorial, the reviews in VG&CE should be used as informational guidelines, not as bottom-line "yes" or "no" votes to tell you whether a game is worth buying or not. Our writers are among the best in the video-game business, and you can always trust the opinions you read in these pages—but it's up to you to arm yourself with as much knowledge as you can in order to make an informed decision as a consumer.

That's easy for owners of the full-sized game systems, most of whom can walk into a nearby video store and rent games to see what they like. But it's not the same for portable gamers, who rarely get the opportunity to try games before they buy 'em. That's something I keep in mind when I prepare this column each month. If *Gaming on the Go* happens to be your only source of Game Boy, Game Gear or Lynx information, I'll try to make sure that it's all you really need. Hope your batteries are charged up, 'cause here we go....

Awesome Golf

ATARI

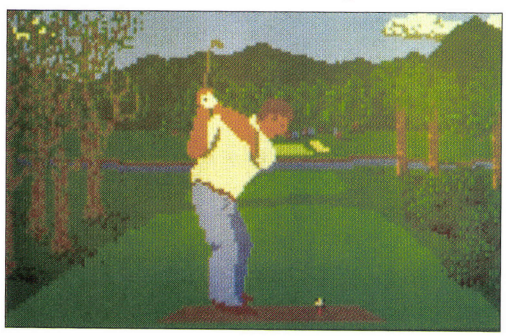
For the Atari Lynx ($34.99)

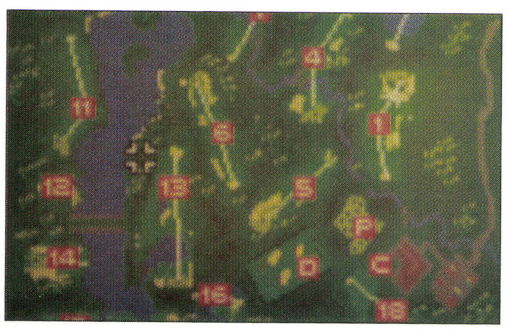
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
SOUND/MUSIC						6				
GRAPHICS								8		
PLAYABILITY								8		
OVERALL								8		

"Let's play *Awesome Golf*!" chirped the voice of Chipper the Chipmunk when I plugged in Atari's latest Lynx title. Hey, I've never been one known to turn down an invitation like that, so off I went....

The game presents a pretty comprehensive golf experience, and, like Atari's recent auto-racing hit, *Checkered Flag*, it allows the player to fine-tune the game to his or her liking by offering the chance to make adjustments to a wide range of variables. Three different courses are available, and you can choose from ten different characters (five of each gender) to approximate your own physical appearance on the screen. Wind can be adjusted or eliminated, golfers can be handicapped for multiplayer ComLynx contests and you can take practice shots on any hole or even check out the driving range.

Awesome Golf, by Atari, for the Lynx.





The game play is very satisfying. Hitting the ball can be tricky—but not too tricky—and it flies and bounces in a realistic fashion. The animation of the golfers is very well done, and the Lynx's scaling abilities really shine when you zoom in and out of the map screen that appears before each hole.

One of the most interesting things about *Awesome Golf* is the way the programmers were able to keep the game true to life, yet still retain enough subtle humor to make it fun. For example, if you bogey a hole, a silhouette of Humphrey Bogart appears in the circular information window—a birdie, of course, results in a similarly humorous response. And I'm not even going to try to explain how a deranged grounds keeper was able to visit golf courses on three different continents and carve Atari's "Fuji" logo into the driving range of each one!

With its realistic graphics and wide range of options, *Awesome Golf* qualifies as one of the finest golf titles available for any of the cartridge-based video-game systems.

Atari Corporation
1196 Borregas Ave.
Sunnyvale, CA 94088-3427
(408) 745-2000

Blaster Master Boy

SUNSOFT

For the Nintendo Game Boy ($27.95)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
SOUND/MUSIC									9	
GRAPHICS						6				
PLAYABILITY							7			
OVERALL							7			

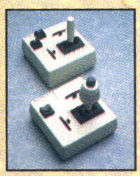
I have to admit that when I first popped this cartridge into my Game Boy I was a little disappointed that the game was not a downsized clone of *Blaster Master*, one of the finest available NES titles (and the feature on the cover of the very first issue of VG&CE). While it does resemble certain portions of the original, *Blaster Master Boy* strips the vehicle away from Jason, our helmeted hero, and converts *Blaster Master*'s exploration sequences into a lengthy, full-featured *Bomberman* variation. Here, Jason's adventure consists of little more than wandering through a world of

KICK BACK

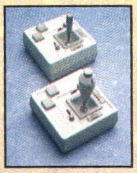
and relax, you've got a CH Products Controller!



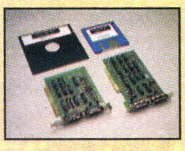
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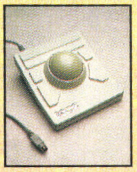
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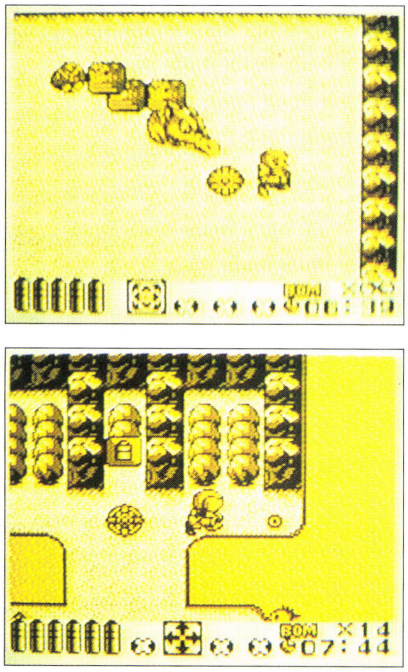
CIRCLE #142 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

rocks, trees and evil mutants, and blasting his way from one area to the next.

By far, the most outstanding feature of *Blaster Master Boy* is the game's pulsating stereo soundtrack. The visuals, too, are stylish—a surprising revelation when you consider the fact that most of the game's graphic elements must be laid out in grids of 16 x 16 pixel squares. In fact, Nintendo asked Sunsoft to change the appearance of one of the game's boss characters—it was a case of the graphics being a little bit *too* graphic.

Even though *Bomberman* has never caught on in the United States the way it has in Japan, there's still a lot to be said for the basic premise of the game's design. It should be noted that a Game Boy version of this classic has already appeared as *Atomic Punk* from Hudson Soft, creators of *Bomberman*. And, while *Atomic Punk* took the original *Bomberman* and combined it with a slick, updated version of the game in the same cartridge, *Blaster Master Boy* carries the concept one step further. Both of these games are entertaining, but they're similar enough to prevent me from recommending one over the other.

Sunsoft
11165 Knott Ave.
Cypress, CA 90630
(714) 891-4500



Sunsoft's *Blaster Master Boy* for the Game Boy.

Super Golf

SAGE'S CREATION

For the Sega Game Gear ($34.45)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10

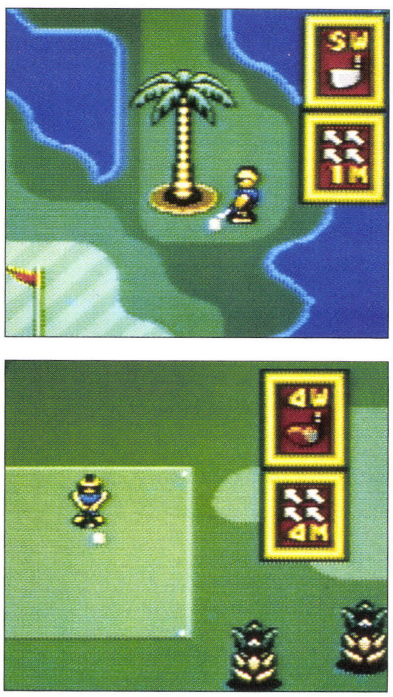
Unlike a growing number of golf video games, *Super Golf* doesn't really give a hoot about realism, accurate details or complex control options. It doesn't appear to be aimed at kids, but I'd have to say that they're the ones who will enjoy it most.

When creating your on-screen surrogate golfer, you'll have four characters to choose from: a mohawked bodybuilder, a dark-haired girl, a winking blonde and a smug, Alex Trebek look-alike. You can pick a name of five characters or less and balance your skills between categories such as "power," "control" or "lucky." Choosing a caddie is the next step—there are four available, and each one has the ability to offer expert advice in different areas of your game.

After you tee off on the first hole, it quickly becomes apparent that there's not much skill involved in playing *Super Golf*. In attempting to simulate the assistance of a knowledgeable caddie, the computer sets up every single shot. It picks a club for you, positions your golfer, lines up the path of the ball—all you have to do is control the amount of power you put into each swing. You can make adjustments to any of these variables, but it's not uncommon to brainlessly birdie half of the course's 18 holes without ever changing the default conditions that the computer has prepared for you.

Though it should be said that the characters and caddies give the game more personality than most golf titles, *Super Golf*'s lightweight game play can't compare to that of Sega's own Game Gear golf simulator, *World Class Leaderboard*. Bright colors and an easy-on-the-ears stereo soundtrack make for a relaxing game, but it's not quite challenging enough to captivate anyone who has more than a passing interest in the game of golf as it is played in the real world.

Sage's Creation Inc.
12062 Valley View St., Suite 250
Garden Grove, CA 92645
(714) 893-0309



Super Golf, by Sage's Creation, for the Game Gear.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II—Back From the Sewers

KONAMI

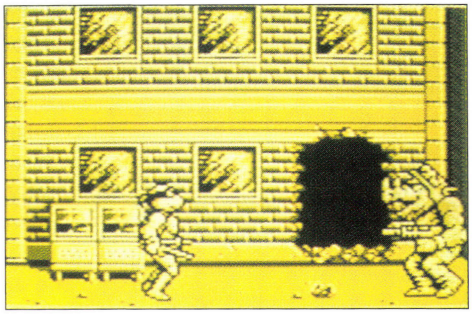
For the Nintendo Game Boy (N/A)

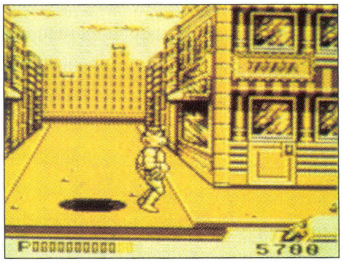
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

I'm a little surprised that the Turtles' newest video-game adventure is taking place on the Game Boy instead of on the Super NES or the Genesis. Fortunately, this portable powerhouse packs enough punch to keep us occupied while we're waiting for the half-shelled heroes to make their 16-bit debut.

Considering the fact that the characters in *Back From the Sewers* are larger than those in the Turtles' first Game Boy title, *Fall of the Foot Clan*, it's a bit of a surprise to find that the Turtles themselves don't have as much personality this time around. Hampered by stiff animation, they stroll through each round as if Master Splinter has just finished teaching them the finer points of that all-important Ninja skill: the art of good posture.

This weak point aside, the beautifully drawn background graphics nearly steal the show. This is Konami/Ultra's first two-megabit Game Boy title, and the extra memory must have gone into the scrolling scenery—the details practically leap out at you. Along with Acclaim's *Bart Simpson's Escape From Camp Deadly*, it's one of the first Game Boy titles to include digitized speech. (The guys yell "Cowabunga!" before each level and "Pizza time!" when the game is paused.)





Konami's Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II—Back From the Sewers for the Game Boy.

Perhaps the most damaging thing I can say about *Back From the Sewers* is that it doesn't break any new ground as a video game. It's another scrolling beat-the-boss fighting exercise, but it is a pretty fine example of that genre, and the popularity of the main characters can only help. If you're not bothered by the lack of originality, then you'll probably get a kick out of this one—a big, green, two-toed Ninja kick, that is.

Konami Inc.
900 Deerfield Parkway
Buffalo Grove, IL 60089-4510
(708) 215-5100

Terminator 2: Judgment Day

LJN

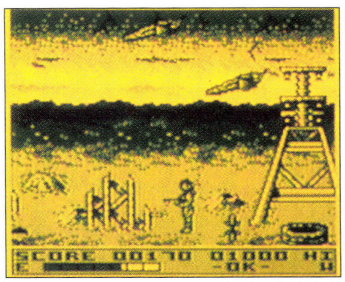
For the Nintendo Game Boy ($27.95)

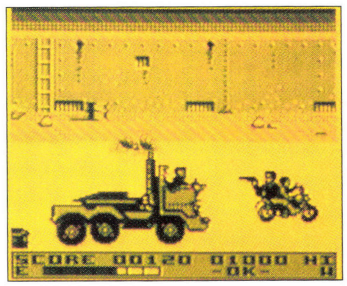
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10

It's tough to write about a game that's based on a hit movie without using the phrase "based on the hit movie" in the very first sentence. Alas, LJN's *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* is...well, it's based on the hit movie. So what did you expect? Hemingway?

With a plot that approximates that of the film, the player assumes the role of futuristic freedom fighter John Connor. You'll blast your way through a war zone, then infiltrate the stronghold of the superpowerful SKYNET computer.

These scrolling run-and-shoot scenarios are followed by a neat puzzle-game sequence that simulates the reprogramming of a T-800 Terminator, a humanoid killing machine. Once the T-800's circuits have been ordered to protect Connor instead of kill him, the rest of the game lets you control the Terminator itself as it travels through time, shooting at everything in sight and ultimately altering the course of events that caused global warfare in the year 1997.





Terminator 2: Judgment Day, by LJN, for the Game Boy.

Sound confusing? It is, a little—but the manual does a good job of tying the game's six levels into a coherent plot. Information boxes can also be found on occasion; touch one of these and your mom—sorry, I mean Sarah Connor—will appear on the screen and explain what you're supposed to be doing. The only thing that isn't explained is why some of the music in *Terminator 2* is so similar to the soundtrack of Bullet-Proof's *Faceball 2000*.

The game play is interesting and varied, despite a touch of the *Turrican* syndrome: You don't always notice when your character has been hit. And the graphics are very good—almost too good in some cases. Certain levels have so many things happening on the screen that it's hard to focus on your objective. There are devices that allow you to play Game Boy cartridges on a full-sized TV screen; if they ever make them available to the public, *Terminator 2* is one of the first titles I'd want to look at.

LJN Ltd.
1 Spring St.
Oyster Bay, NY 11771
(516) 922-2400

Tournament Cyberball

ATARI

For the Atari Lynx ($39.99)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10

In another decent conversion of a popular Atari Games coin-op machine, *Tournament Cyberball* shows what we might expect football to be like in the next century. Robot players, a lack of penalties and an exploding pigskin are all part of the fun, and coaches can even buy more advanced robots to upgrade their team in the middle of a game.

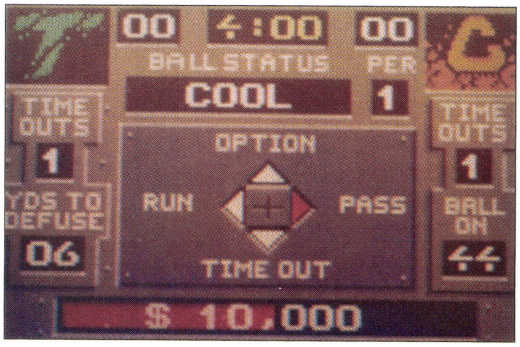
Though the graphics, sounds and game play are all satisfactory, I have a serious problem with the collision detection in *Tournament Cyberball*—one I didn't expect to see, considering the fact that there are only seven players on each team and most of them are only ten or 12 pixels high. Since the game uses an

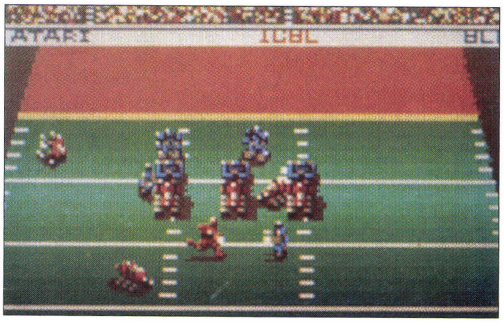
angled perspective looking down on the field, a robot will often overlap another player that is positioned just behind it on the screen. Yet, when you're trying to get away from a defender who is chasing you up the field, if *one lousy pixel* of that defensive back's head should overlap the *shadow* beneath your player, the play is called dead with a harsh "clang!"—and sometimes it's quite obvious that your player has not even been touched.

Part of the reason for these screwy laws of physics may lie in the game's two-player mode, which allows you to use the ComLynx cable to give each player a view from his end zone. Because the program must keep track of two different viewpoints, these "phantom tackles" may represent the fact that the other viewpoint—unseen in a one-player game—does indeed show that contact has been made.

Of course, complaints like these will be considered pretty insignificant by some players; heck, if you're good enough, you'll learn how to exploit this quirk on defense. Though it's probably going to be more of a hit with fans of the arcade version than with those who have never seen the original, *Tournament Cyberball* is a welcome addition to a Lynx library that has been thin in the area of sports titles for too long.

Atari Corporation
1196 Borregas Ave.
Sunnyvale, CA 94088-3427
(408) 745-2000





Atari's *Tournament Cyberball* for the Lynx.

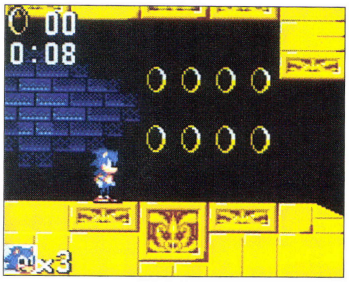
Sonic the Hedgehog

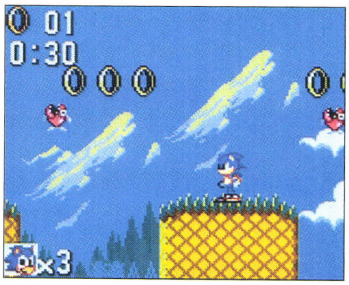
SEGA

For the Sega Game Gear ($39.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10

Almost every video-game journalist in the world has been known to sing the praises of Sega's flagship Genesis title, *Sonic the Hedgehog*. When I reviewed the game for the June 1991 issue of VG&CE, I went so far as to suggest that Sega pull all their copies of *Altered Beast* and include *Sonic* with the Genesis system instead—and look what happened! (Hmmm...come to think of it, why haven't we seen a Game Gear version of *Altered Beast* yet? But I digress.)





Sega's *Sonic the Hedgehog* for the Game Gear.

For the past few weeks, I've been enjoying *Sonic*'s brilliant colors and high-speed quest for Dr. Robotnik all over again; but this time I've been doing it on the bus, on my front porch and even in the bathroom. The Game Gear does a great job of showcasing this mini-masterpiece, with incredibly lush graphics and plenty of hidden bonuses. It even includes some things that were not featured in the Genesis version, like map screens and a series of huge pinball-style bonus rooms. One look at the evocative colors in the "underwater" sequences and you'll know that this is one *Super Mario* clone that's strong enough to shake off that label and stand on its own.

I hate to spoil a surprise, but the game opens with a very special title screen. Instead of centering the familiar Sega logo on a light blue background, our favorite hedgehog appears in a field of brilliant white. He quickly "paints" a huge Sega logo in navy blue, then hops back across the letters and takes his place next to the "S" as a chorus of digitized voices sings out "Saaay-gaaa!" A nice touch; unfortunately, a source at Sega says that this introduction will not appear in any other Game Gear title.

Even before the game starts, it's obvious that Sega has pulled out all the stops on this one; the Game Gear version of *Sonic the Hedgehog* includes everything but the kitchen sink. (Heck, it wouldn't even surprise me if there was a kitchen sink in there somewhere!) If not for the lack of multiplane scrolling and the lesser sound quality, it'd be nearly indistinguishable from the Genesis version. As it is, it's the finest Game Gear title I've played yet.

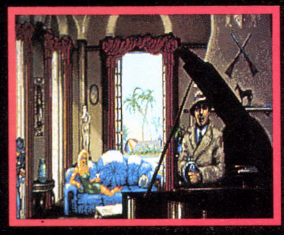
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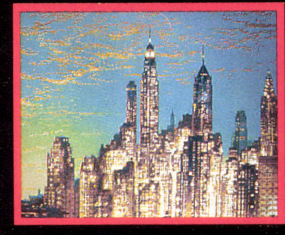












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StarBlade

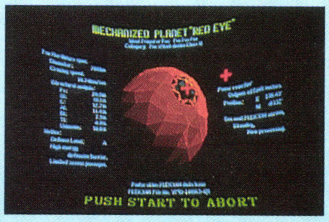
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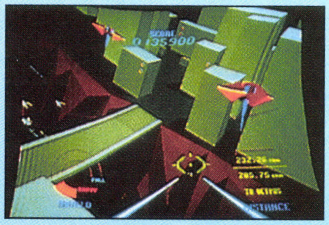
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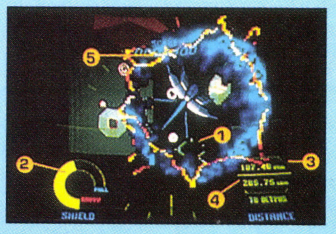
Many years ago, the United Federation received a message from the Empire. The message demanded the Federation surrender or the Federation's home planet, Mother Planet, would be destroyed. The message was ignored by the Federation—that is, until the mechanized planet Red Eye and its massive squadrons of starships appeared. At the gunner controls of one of the finest starfighters in the galaxy, the FX-01 Geosword, your mission is to penetrate the enemy lines and completely obliterate Red Eye by destroying its core, known as Octopus.

StarBlade, by Namco, uses 3-D polygon graphics and controls that are similar to the ones found on the Atari classic, *Star Wars*. On screen, you'll see the laser-gun sight that you'll use to guide the beams to the target. The laser beams are similar to the ones found in *Steel Gunner*, but, instead of appearing to be part of the gun, they appear more on-screen. In the bottom-left portion of the screen is a shield gauge that will decrease with each hit you take. Finally, on the bottom-right side of the screen is the calculated distance you've traveled and how much distance is remaining before reaching Red Eye.









Namco's *StarBlade* uses polygon graphics and controls similar to Atari's classic, *Star Wars*.

There are actually three stages to the game. Your first objective is destroying Red Eye. Once it's out of the way, you encounter the large battleship IceBerg. In the final stage, you have a confrontation with the enemy command ship, which has been dogging you since shortly after you put your quarter in the machine.

Since you're the gunner on the Geosword, your main concern is to blast all the enemies that fly by. Most of the enemies you'll encounter dart about the screen faster than a water bug in a pond, making it somewhat difficult to hit them. The way the game is designed, including the weaving in and out of the larger craft, you're given a sense of realism not experienced by playing most games of this type. It's as if you're actually looking through a porthole in the ship as you pass an enemy tower. This could also be due to the front glass, which magnifies the screen and curves it to create some neat effects. Other features include quadraphonic sound, for clear, crisp explosions and a cockpit that vibrates when you're hit.

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The War of 1999 is only a few hours old when reporters at the scene begin to mysteriously disappear. The top on-air reporter, Candy Blitzer, is in the middle of reporting on the war and about to divulge the identity of the person responsible for the war correspondents' disappearances when suddenly a large, unidentified purple hand appears and quickly pulls her off-screen. The world is left staring at television snow with the word CENSORED stamped across the screen, and before you can say "Dan Rather," the network switches to government headquarters.

Here, we find General Schwarzenpowell looking at a monitor showing a detailed map of Kookistan and the various points of attack that have taken place. After a few moments of silence, General Schwarzenpowell turns and yells "Call in the Doomsday Squad!" The world now knows of the general's decision and can only wait for the outcome. Back at headquarters, Captain Carnage and Major Mayhem aren't content to sit back idle, for they are the Doomsday Squad, and they're ready for action. Yet, it won't be easy to topple General Akhboob's Million-Man Army and his evil mutant experiments without using every map, secret code, special warp and all the incredible firepower at the Doomsday Squad's disposal.

Total Carnage is a two-joystick game from the makers of *Robotron 2084* and *Smash TV*. In fact, the dual joystick controls that allow you to move in one direction while firing in another and the format of a single game play screen where you must destroy all the enemies before moving to the next room or screen may look familiar to those of you who have played the other games. One added feature is a bomb button that detonates a massive wave of destruction across the entire screen.











Midway's *Total Carnage* uses a cute parody on Desert Storm's heroes in its story line.

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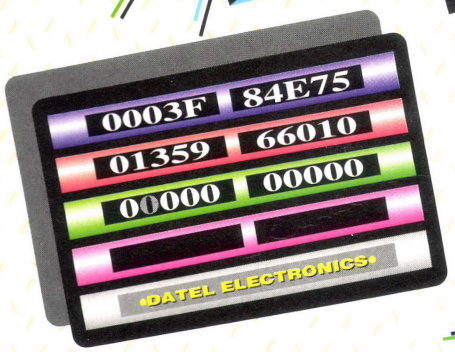
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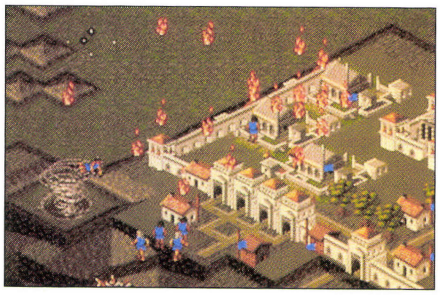
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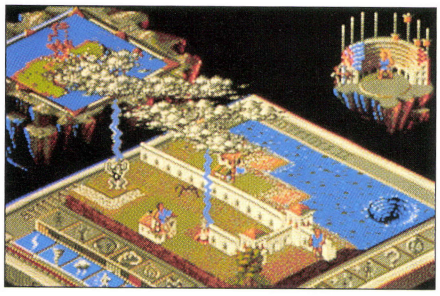
Populous II

ELECTRONIC ARTS

Version Previewed: Amiga

Bullfrog's incredibly popular action-strategy game is going to have a sequel. The extremely tentative version evaluated by VG&CE's corps of computer editors leaves many questions about the game unanswered, yet the early indications are exceptionally encouraging.





***Populous II*, the much-anticipated sequel by Bullfrog, is currently under development.**

Populous II, like its predecessor, puts the gamer in the world-building business. A point-and-click command control scheme, based on the rows of icons along two edges of the main display, lets the computerist interact with the planet's ever-changing environmental and societal conditions.

At this stage in its development, *Populous II* is chiefly notable for the tremendous improvement in the graphics and animation. All the artwork is cleaner, larger and more detailed than in the first *Populous*. Another significant improvement is that the color selection for the many on-screen objects makes them much easier to distinguish when they overlap.

—Bill Kunkel

Electronic Arts
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San Mateo, CA 94404
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Patton Strikes Back

BRØDERBUND

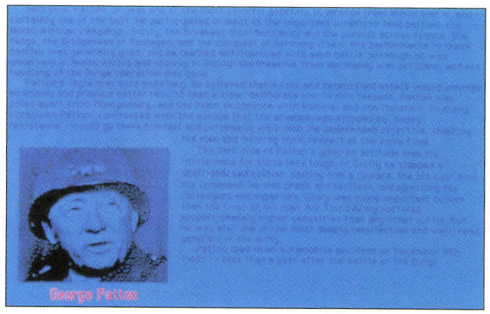
Version Previewed: Macintosh

The inimitable Chris Crawford returns to his old stomping grounds—war gaming—with this solitaire simulation. Gamers can show their skill on either side of one of the most controversial campaigns of World War II: Hitler's final great offensive to blunt the rapidly advancing Allied armies and the counterattack led by General George S. Patton. Many simulations have concentrated on the German attempt to break through, but *Patton Strikes Back* also focuses on the attempt to reduce the German bulge that bent, but did not break, the Allied line.

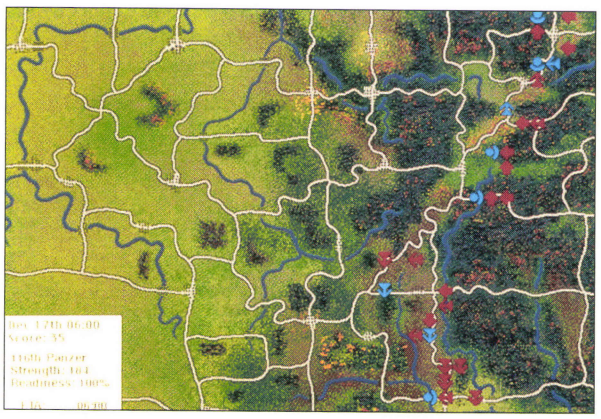
A battle of this magnitude demands a good control system, and Crawford's point-and-click interface provides information about, and excellent command control over, every unit on the field. Clicking on a unit prints its identity, strength and readiness in the text window located in the lower-left corner of the screen. Tactical and strategic maps, accessed through the menu bar, keep the compu-general apprised of the total situation and the progress of specific skirmishes.

Players give orders to one division at a time and see a graphic representation of the division's future response to the command. Execution occurs over a period of time, how-

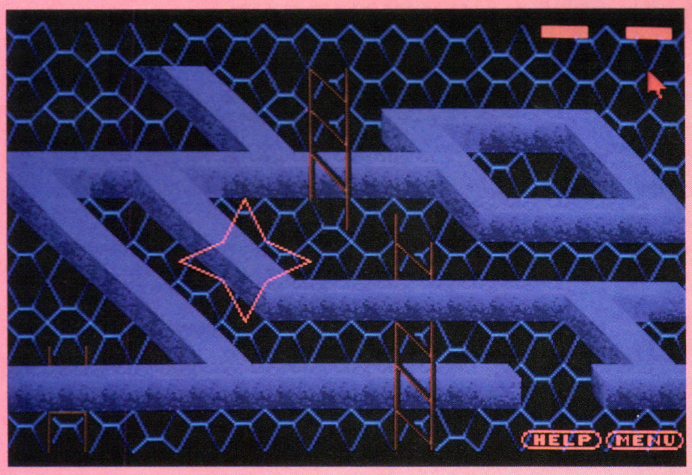




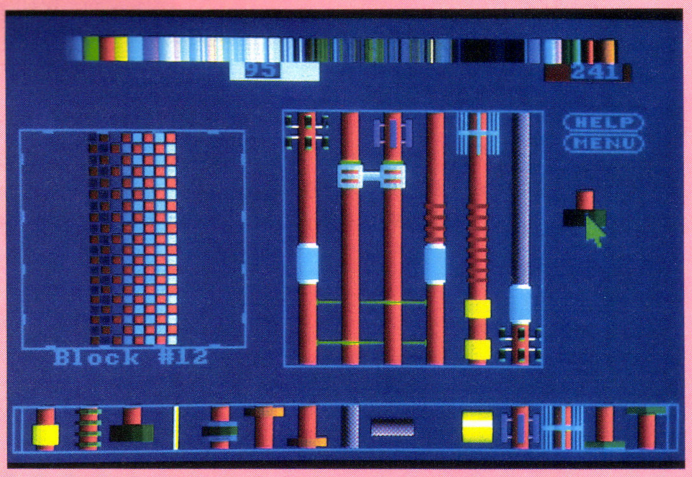
***Patton Strikes Back* uses an historical information data base that allows gamers to research weapons, tactics and other items.**



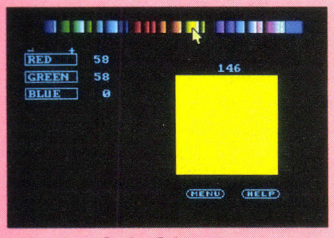
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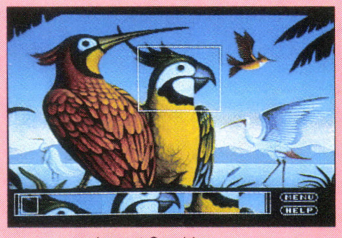
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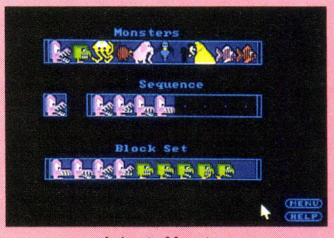
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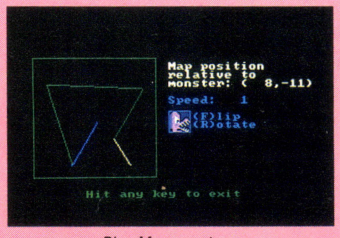
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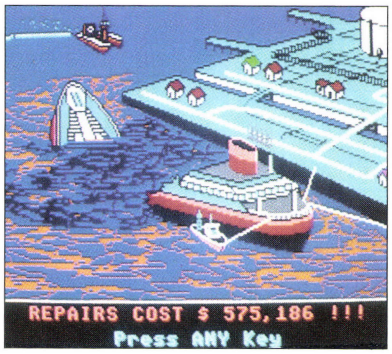
ever, so that *Patton Strikes Back* achieves the effect of simultaneous movement.

Historical information is online and always available. A menu lets the computerist research weapons, tactics, personalities, strategies and units. Mini newsreels highlight major events associated with this campaign. The user has the option of curtailing or eliminating such visual frills, which could be a temper-saver the third or fourth time through the simulation.

Patton Strikes Back is heavy-duty war gaming, with all the player aids and trimmings the manifold mind of Chris Crawford can conceive. Its release should be a major event for military simulationists.

—B.K.

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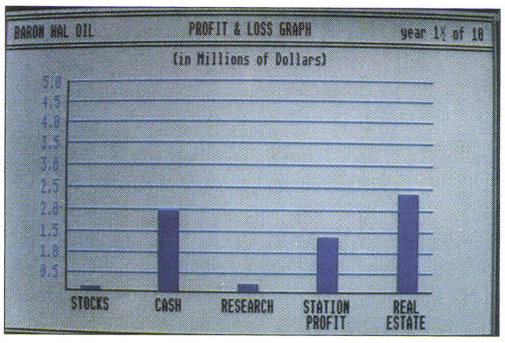
If you have ever wanted to be an oil tycoon like J.R. Ewing, then Lobo Software's *Oil Barons* might be the game for you.

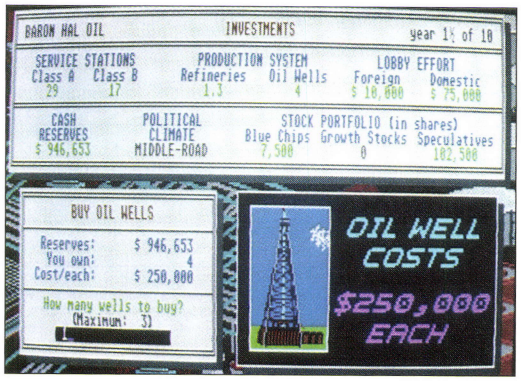
Oil Barons

LOBO SOFTWARE
Version Previewed: IBM PC

They don't hardly make games like *Oil Barons* any more. It's a complex—but not necessarily complicated—strategy contest that allows up to a quartet of players to run a game that lasts anywhere from one to ten years in simulated time.

Developer Starsoft Development Laboratories threw in everything but the kitchen sink on this one: corporate mergers, lobbyists (foreign and domestic), hostile takeovers, longshoremen on strike and plenty of statistical updates.





Even better, *Oil Barons* adds some nice graphics that enhance the playability of the game tremendously. If you like simulations of this type or ever wanted to play J.R. Ewing without the babes and sibling rivalry (c'mon guys, it's *only* a computer game), this one is well worth checking out.

—B.K.

Lobo Software
1400 Coleman Ave.
Santa Clara, CA 95050
(408) 727-8161

Nova 9

DYNAMIX
Version Previewed: IBM PC

Nova 9 is more than just *Stellar 7* with two more battlefields. When the game begins, it's been two years since Stellar 7 was wasted. Draxon Captain John Alex, alone in the vast isolation of outer space, has begun receiving some rather disturbing reports from the uncharted system Nova 9 concerning a humanoid creature that spread like a plague over





the nine planets of the system in a matter of days.

The player-character flies a newly built Raven II which, despite its awesome array of weaponry, doesn't seem like much of a match for the planet-eating monster despoiling Nova 9.

Gir Draxon, supreme commander, is back, or at least his file has been reactivated—good super-villains never die, they just wait for sequels. There's also a wide range of new weaponry, such as the Montrose, a hovertank with extremely tough armor; the superfast and maneuverable, but lightly shielded, Phoenix; and the cockroach-like Wobbly, with its laser weapons.

The planets in the Nova system are a sufficiently varied bunch, but one can hardly help but feel a sense of déjà vu while playing this game, due to its similarities to *Stellar 7*. (Version 3, for CD, has just been released and is extremely hot, while the original version was an Apple II/C-64 flippy in the mid-'80s.) Nevertheless, this looks like one hot cookie!

—B.K.

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STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS INC.
Version Previewed: IBM PC

This follow-up to Westwood's popular RPG looks like a solid hit for fans of the original, who can transfer their characters from the first game or create their own. They will experience outdoor adventuring, multiple game saves and improved graphics in both the game play and cut scenes.

This game also allows players to take characters to higher levels (up to 15), provides more characters to interact with and offers new spells and improved monsters (if "improved" is indeed the appropriate word for describing a more powerful monster).

A $15 clue book will also be available.

—B.K.

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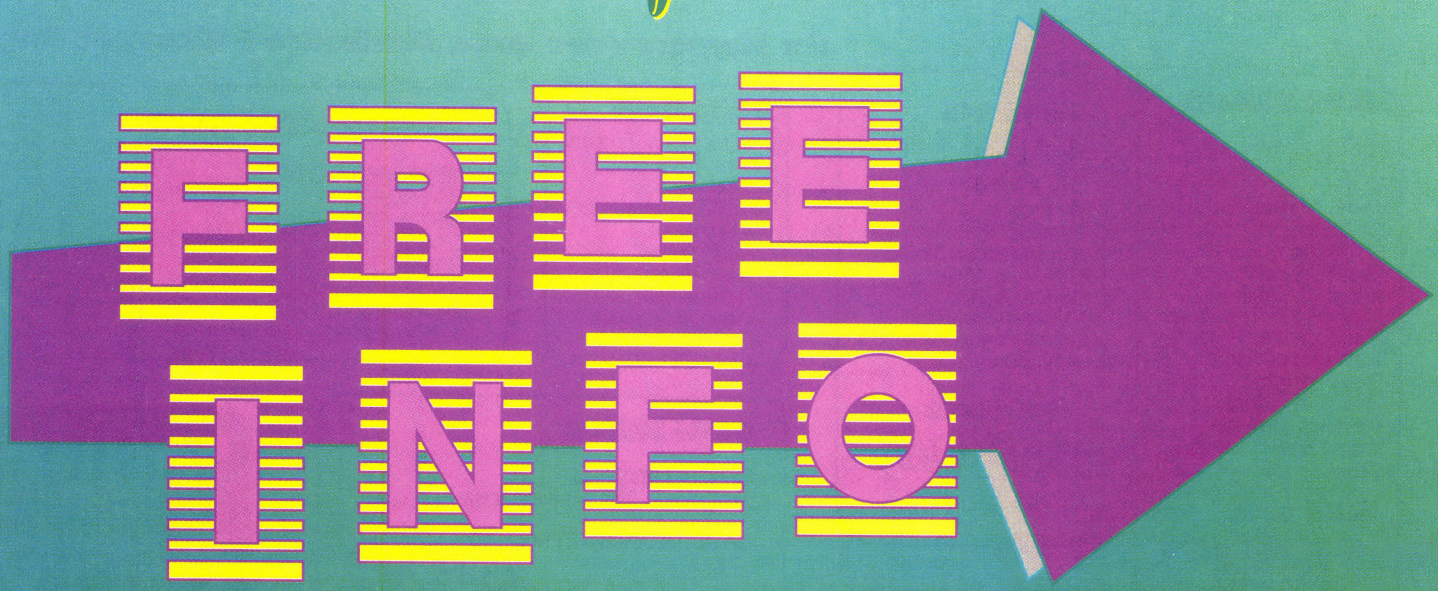
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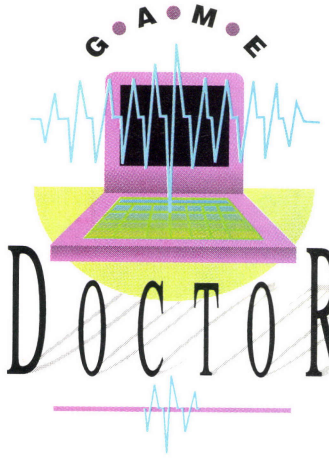
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GAMING'S ANSWER TO AN ANTACID SETTLES YOUR SOFTWARE DISPUTES

by
the Game Doctor

Well, the pandemonium has finally settled down here after the monumental events surrounding our tenth-anniversary blowout, and we're ready to grapple once again with the problems and crises of your gaming lives. This time out, we're going to concentrate on some of the more offbeat questions we've received in recent months. So let's rock and roll....

question

When I was a little kid, I collected stickers in an album. Years later, when I became involved in video games, I looked back at the stickers I had collected and noticed a group that had a 1981 copyrighted game from Sega called *Turbo*. Can you tell me if this is a classic game that used to exist for the SMS?

—Clark Otto
Saukville, WI

answer

Sega has had several driving titles that have reappeared in a variety of formats, including *Turbo*, *Outrun* and *Enduro*. Variations on these titles, including such hybrids as *Turbo Outrun*, have also turned up. *Turbo* was a coin-op hit for Sega in the early 1980s, but since no form of the Sega Master System existed at that time, it did not appear in that format. Coleco, however, did produce a home version of *Turbo* for its video-game software line, but by the time the SMS hit these shores, the Sega arcade racing titles used were *Enduro Racer*, a motorcycle racing game that used a weird, top/down angled perspective; *Hang On*, also a cycle racer with a *Pole Position*-style visual display; and *Outrun*, which had been a huge hit in the arcades, owing to its fabulous graphics. *Outrun*, like *Hang On*, used a pseudo-first-person perspective, with the gamer's vehicle fully displayed on-screen in the lower foreground.

question

Back in the late '70s or early '80s there was an arcade game that used actual video footage of places. You had a top-down view and dropped bombs on ships in the shipyard and on railroad tracks and things. The ships and other targets were videotaped or something. Can you help?

—Brian K. Watson
Cleveland, TN

answer

Well, I believe you have your dates a little mixed up, Brian, but the game you're talking about sure sounds like Mylstar's *M.A.C.H. 3*. Gottlieb had just changed its nonpinball line to Mylstar, and *M.A.C.H. 3* was a big-budget game that employed a combination of computer and laser disc technology. At the start of the game, the player got to choose between two missions. One used a top/down perspective and the other used a pseudo-first-person point of view. The target images were actual video footage stored on laser disc, while the player's ship was generated through conventional computer technology. Alas, this game, along with other ambitious laser disc projects such as Atari's *Firefox*, Cinematronic's *Space Ace* and Sega's *Astron Belt*, proved too expensive for most arcade operators, and laser disc technology was soon dropped. This game actually appeared in early 1984.

question

I hear about Nintendo cartridges that have over 20 games on them. Where could I find one of these cartridges?

—Bryan Pizzillo
Sykesville, MD

answer

There is some question as to the legality of some of these carts, Bryan, but MaxiVision (3855 S. Valley View, Las Vegas, NV 89103) will be issuing them legitimately. Maxi's cart will contain 30 games and will retail for $149. MaxiVision has licensed quite a few older games, some of which will appear under new titles.

question

I love to read your column! I own an NES, a Genesis and a Super Famicom. I modified my Genesis to play Mega Drive games; I would like to know if there is a way that I will be able to modify my Super Famicom to play Super NES games.

—Sam Weehunt
Norman, OK

answer

Good news, Sam! The Super NES seems to be almost fully compatible with the Super Famicom...well, at least the hardware is. The only difference between the American and Japanese consoles seems to be in the plastic cartridge housing and the cartridge slot. Barring last-minute changes and hardware revisions, this is a problem that we Super Famicom owners hopefully won't have to deal with. Keep your collective video-gaming fingers crossed, gang!

question

Congratulations on ten years as The Game Doctor! And what a decade it has been for electronic gaming. The old Doc has always been there, though, to referee those voracious vidiots. Thank you.

In answer to your "Game Nurse Challenge": "Angela" was the name of your last Game Nurse, if memory serves.

—William Simpson
Los Angeles, CA

answer

Way to go, Whimsical Will! The lovely Angela was, indeed, Game Nurse Becky's immediate predecessor, though there were one or two others in there, keeping the circuit dabs fresh through the long decade of selfless service to gamers everywhere.

By the way, fans of cult icon and fellow mock medic Doctor Demento may recognize Will Simpson as the longtime radio sidekick of the Demented One. Keep 'em flying, William; your Game Doctor Prize Packet is On The Way!

question

When I was rereading some old C-64 gaming magazines recently, I saw a review for a Scott Adams Questprobe game based on Marvel Comics' Incredible Hulk. That reminded me of an advertisement on the back cover of Uncanny X-Men #203 for the *Incredible Hulk* and two other Questprobe games: *Spiderman* and *The Fantastic Four*. Where can I find these games for the C-64?

—Morgan (Longshot) Foust
Modesto, CA

answer

The best bet would probably be through a Commodore users group or at a garage sale. Then, of course, there are those dealers in exotic software whom the Doc mentions periodically. As a matter of fact, Frank M. Polosky (P.O. Box 9542, Pittsburgh, PA 15223) just sent a new catalog containing some very rare, old electronic-gaming magazines, in addition to the software. Pleasant Valley Video (8141 Pleasant Valley Road, Camden, OH 45311) also deals in out-of-stock video and computer games, magazines, books, etc.

However, don't have high expectations for the specific Marvel-based products you mentioned. The fact that Scott Adams, one of the pioneers of computer entertainment software, is no longer in the business has more than a little to do with these illustrated text adventures, which were woefully behind state-of-the-art even when they were first released.

question

In the July '91 issue, you answered a letter from Bill Maddy concerning auto-booting on Amiga, Apple and C-64 computers. While most of the info you gave was correct, you are mistaken on a thing or two about the C-64. The C-64 doesn't have a **START** button; it doesn't have buttons at all—it has a keyboard. It does have a **RUN/STOP** key. Most programs on the C-64 can be run by typing: LOAD "*",8,1.

—L. Snyder
Elfrida, AZ

answer

Sometimes the old Doc's brain skips a gear, and this was obviously such a case. In fact, I had no idea what you were even *talking* about until I went back and reread the question to which you refer.

What I *intended* to say was that, in addition to the beloved load program you mention in your letter, many programs also required the user to type the word RUN. My fingers just got crossed in the translation.

It happens when you get old, partner. It happens.

question

I've been wondering why Atari hasn't made a 16-bit machine, since NEC, Sega and Nintendo made them; why not Atari?

—Do H. Noh
Riverdale, MD

answer

Actually Atari *was* working on a 16-bit-based game machine under the code name "Panther," but the project was recently scuttled, since Atari felt it was already so far behind in the 16-bit development race. Rumors have already begun to surface, however, of a 64-bit system, bearing the similarly feline code name "Jaguar." Once actual facts—as opposed to rumors—become available, you'll read all about it right here in VG&CE.

And that about closes up shop for this issue. Next time out, we have a great letter from a fellow known as "The Fruitman" that attempts to unravel the mysteries of:

•Which companies own which versions of *Tetris* and how did they get them?

•Which Atari is which?

And several other excellent questions. By the way, special thanks to Issac Merkle for the great Game Doctor cartoon! Aloha, gang!

Remember, send those questions, comments and corrections to:

Game Doctor
330 S. Decatur, Suite 152
Las Vegas, NV 89107.



Fabulous Fanzines for Every Taste

by Arnie Katz

The great thing about electronic-gaming fandom is its incredible diversity. The professional gaming magazines, good as they are in most respects, can't offer the spectrum of opinion found in these bright and enthusiastic amateur publications.

And these are passionate opinions. Someone is willing to spend his time and money to communicate his thoughts and ideas to you. The fanzines don't have the graphic splendor or editorial polish of the newsstand titles, but the fanzine editors' excitement about gaming and obvious joy in their hobby is irresistible.

Getting in on the fun is simpler than you might think. Just send for one or more of the fanzines I review each issue—then submit articles, artwork or a letter of comment to the ones that catch your interest. Or go all the way and do a fanzine of your own! (Fanzines don't really compete with each other, so you can get a mailing list from a friendly publishing fan.)

Another great thing about fanzines is that some specialize in subjects that no professional magazine could possibly treat adequately. Let's start off this month's reviews of current fanzines with a striking example of just such a fanzine.

2600 Connection #6

Timothy Duarte
14 Blackburn St.
Fairhaven, MA 02719-4334
$6—Bimonthly
Eight pages

This is one fascinating fanzine, even if you don't sit around playing *Air-Sea Battle*, and it's absolutely indispensable if you do. Tim Duarte has just taken over this attractive, bimonthly fanzine, in response to the widespread praise for his outstanding efforts to present information about the Atari 2600 video-game console.

From the interview with designer/programmer Steve Cartwright to the list of mail-order houses that carry 2600 stuff, this fanzine is packed with lots of choice material. Other highlights include a lively letters column, a review of an Australian 2600 cartridge and a detailed solution for *Swordquest: Waterworld*.

The Shape of Gaming to Come #2

Darren Krolewski
12311 Conservation Trail
Utica, MI 48315
$1.50 for three issues—Bimonthly
Six pages

Columns on both video and pinball arcade machines are featured in this fast-improving fanzine, but Darren doesn't neglect the home games. The best article in the issue is a fairly accurate description of Atari's efforts to develop a new console to dominate cartridge gaming in the 1990s.

The Shape of Gaming to Come concentrates on spotting new trends. Commentary is enthusiastic, but well-balanced and sensible. This fanzine has made tremendous strides in just two issues, so I'm making it one of my "best bets."

MegaForce #3

A.J. Ramos
33022 Lake Huron St.
Fremont, CA 94555
$2.50 for three issues
14 pages

Despite the number, this is A.J.'s first issue. Former editor Kris Newes moved to Japan to pursue a career in computer engineering, but *MegaForce* appears to be in good hands. A.J.'s fanzine includes such appealing touches as a good letter column, as well as a fanzine review section.

The main focus is 16-bit video gaming, with A.J. himself contributing many of the reviews. A little more attention to analyzing the guts of each cartridge would improve the content, but Mr. Ramos is a valuable addition to the ranks of fanzine editors.

ATTENTION FANZINE READERS

The final edition of the Fanzine Readers List is available to any fanzine editor who sends a self-addressed stamped envelope. It's a great way to start your own mailing list of possible subscribers. If you want your name and address included on the list, simply write and ask. In either case, here's the address: Arnie Katz, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107.

You can now get the fall Fanzine List from Arnie Katz (see address above), also available by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope. It contains the names, addresses, prices and brief content descriptions of dozens of current electronic-gaming fanzines. If you want to get into this fast-growing hobby, send for the list, and try some sample copies of the ones that sound best.

MEGAGAMING

The biweekly "Voice of Electronic Gaming," produced by Arnie Katz, Bill Kunkel and Joyce Worley, contains news and commentary with a behind-the-scenes perspective. It features reviews of current fanzines and an advice column for novice (and experienced) fanzine editors. For a three-issue trial subscription, send $5 to *Megagaming*, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107.

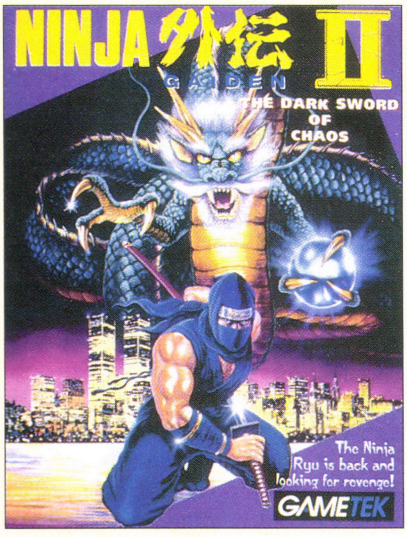
continued from page 81

trigue with atmospheric visions that evoke the mysterious Far East. Jeff Tunnell and his Dynamix crew have crafted a masterpiece of exotic backgrounds, multiple perspectives and high drama.

Best Coin-Op to Computer Game Translation

The family amusement centers, once the fountainhead of new home computer-game ideas, have largely dried up. Even when home and coin-ops share the same name, they are usually designed and programmed independently by different development teams. For example, although there is a *Simpsons* game both for arcades and the NES, they have different formats, goals and graphics.

Another problem is that most of the best coin-op to home game translations target the video-game market. The kind of all-out action games that score big in the coin-op palaces just don't fly in the home computer environment. That's why hits like Atari Games' *Hard Drivin'* or Sega's *Columns* rarely make it to computer.



The year's top arcade-to-computer translation is *Ninja Gaiden II* (GameTek for the IBM PC). It's a fine transport of the second entry in the successful Tecmo series. The figures are small, but they look extremely impressive moving about the nighttime skyline. The music sounds especially good through the Sound Blaster.

Most Innovative Computer Game

Innovation and quality aren't synonymous. Most of 1991's best games optimized existing design approaches and stayed in the mainstream. Even in a year in which novelty was in short supply, there were more fresh ideas than there are awards. The next wave of CD titles will make the quantum leaps, but our winners did significantly extend the boundaries of computer gaming.

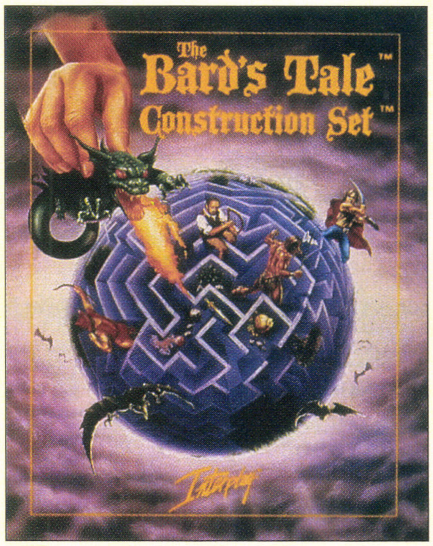


Wordtris (Spectrum HoloByte for the IBM PC) proves that all sequels to *Tetris* are not created equal. Rarely has a follow-up game displayed more freshness and invention than this appealing cross between a word game and a kinetic puzzle.

Faces and *Hatris* have good points, but neither is nearly as entertaining as this permutation of the shape-manipulation play-mechanic. Forming words from falling letters pumps new excitement into this popular series. *Wordtris* is more than an excellent sequel to a computer-gaming perennial; it is a potential classic program in its own right.

Honorable Mention

Most avid players of nonelectronic RPGs want to design scenarios. Armed with piles of instruction books, they can construct a pencil-and-paper module that works within the established framework of rules. Until the introduction of *The Bard's Tale Construction Set* (Interplay Productions for the IBM PC),



fans of computer RPGs were locked out of such activities. It puts the adventuring system that produced a string of hits under the Electronic Arts label in the computerist's direct control.



The Adventures of Willy Beamish (Dynamix for the IBM PC) is a brilliantly original adventure game that poses the question: "What if you were nine again...knowing what you know now?" *Willy Beamish* captures the essence and excitement of youth. Top it off with great graphics and a smooth interface, and you've got one of the years most enjoyable, as well as distinctive, computer-entertainment products!

THE BOTTOM LINE

It wasn't just a good year for video and computer gaming, it was a *great* one. Increased hardware and software sales, modernized game development procedures and expanded machine capabilities should keep the good times rolling in 1992.

Big Business

DIGITEK

Versions: Amiga ($49.95), IBM PC ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

Ever wanted to run your own company, to make important decisions and conduct business deals that either earn a fortune or bust the bank account? *Big Business* from DigiTek Software lets the player do all that and more. Appropriately subtitled *Semi-Realistic Wacky Business Simulation*, *Big Business* takes place in the high-tech business world, but presents it in a goofy way through the use of cartoonish graphics, neat sound effects and a lot of animated surprises. Belying its subject, which might initially seem mundane if not downright boring to some people, *Big Business* is a lot of fun and very easy to learn.

The game pits three players against each other in a contest for mastery of the business world. In one- or two-person games, the computer fills the other slot(s). Each player starts out with equal assets and manufactures the same product. The goal is to earn the most money by the end of the last turn. The path to this goal has many ups and downs, just like the real business world.

Each turn of *Big Business* lasts up to three or six minutes of real time, depending on the start-up options. In a game turn, players command the appropriate company officers in the boardroom to put the company in a better position in the marketplace. The five officers are: Jane Dough (financial officer), Fred WedBetter (purchasing agent), Percy LaFleur (production manager), Dr. Donald Density (research and development manager) and Jim Slick (sales and marketing officer). Selection of an officer takes the player to an options screen geared to that person. At the end of the turn, a cleanup phase lets players buy and sell raw materials, a graph pops up that details sales and a news service reveals the latest headlines via a scrolling page.

The nicest feature of the interface is the separation of a typical company's functions into logical categories by means of the officer screens. To increase production, go to the production manager screen and click on the appropriate icon. To take out a loan or pay off outstanding debts, select Jane Dough. Jim Slick is the sleazeball of the company, ready to dig up dirt about the other players' businesses from his "office" in a local bar. Jim can easily start labor trouble and knows someone who can steal secrets from the other players. But, the player should always keep in mind that all gamers have the same options; what you do to others will very likely soon be done to your own band of execs.

The game designers injected lots of humor, and produced an interface dependent entirely on icons. Play is not much harder than clicking on pictures or objects on the various screens of the game. For example, on the boardroom screen, the yellow tablet reveals the progress of the competition. In the bar scene, clicking on each of the people around the bar brings up a small window that lets players hire the people in their areas of expertise. Such a simple interface enables gamers to concentrate on outguessing their opponents, instead of on the mechanics of play.





DigiTek's *Big Business* uses an interface dependent entirely on icons.

The graphics in *Big Business* produce a sense of irreverent humor and wacky presentation. Each character fits his or her job, and they all have exaggerated features. Watch the screen carefully, because you never know what might happen in the background. For example, there's the businessman who jumps from a higher floor in the opening scene, and you can see him go by your window. Half the fun in the first few games is discovery of the active icons. Sound effects accompany most screens and add a lot to the goofy atmosphere. The subject matter could have made this a very dull and boring game, but the designers kept the interface simple and built in a lot of bells and whistles that make play lively.

As an added bonus, a stock market simulation game called *WallStreet* comes in the *Big Business* package. It's sort of a prac-

tice run for stockbrokers and others whose job it is to play the market with real money.

Big Business is the perfect game for those who like to fantasize about an important company position, and it is a fun way to hone skills for the real world.

—Russ Ceccola

DigiTek Software
1916 Twisting Lane
Wesley Chapel, FL 33543
(813) 973-7733

Chip's Challenge

EPYX
Versions: Amiga ($39.95), Commodore 64 ($33.95), IBM PC ($39.95)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
SOUND/MUSIC						**6**				
GRAPHICS						**6**				
PLAYABILITY								**8**		
OVERALL							**7**			

In *Chip's Challenge* the player is Chip, an outcast nerd who is crazy about Melinda, a very smart girl at Chip's high school. Chip desperately wants to join Melinda's club, the Bit Busters, but first he must pass a test. Chip must work his way through 144 levels of puzzles, each more difficult than the previous, and each involving different methods of problem solving.

Some puzzles require navigation through mazes. Others make the player work his way out by collecting different objects, such as keys, shields, computer chips and dirt blocks. (A key of a certain color opens a door of the same color.) One type of shield lets Chip walk on water, another lets him walk through fire. A pair of boots enables him to walk on ice without slipping. A dirt block, when pushed into water, can create a floor piece where the water was. The player must use the correct combination of tools to pass each level safely.

If finding and using objects wasn't enough, almost all of the levels have creatures and traps that will kill Chip, and most of them have a time limit. Each creature has a different pattern of movement and a different way of being stopped. Some traps can be deactivated by a certain color button, while others must be dodged or blocked.

When all the factors working against poor Chip are totaled, it appears that Chip doesn't have much hope of winning the fair Melinda. Fortunately, the game provides help if he gets completely stuck on one level. Some levels have a question mark, which, when stepped on, provides a small hint to passing that level. Other levels may offer the player a chance to skip the level if he keeps dying over and over. Luckily, each level has a code so the player can return to the spot where Chip left off.

The player controls Chip's movements with the keyboard or joystick. In some of the more perilous levels it is advisable to use the keyboard, because Chip's movements are more precise.

The graphics are only in 16 colors—regrettable, since most players today want VGA graphics. However, even though the graphics aren't absolutely state-of-the-art, they shouldn't turn anyone away from the game.

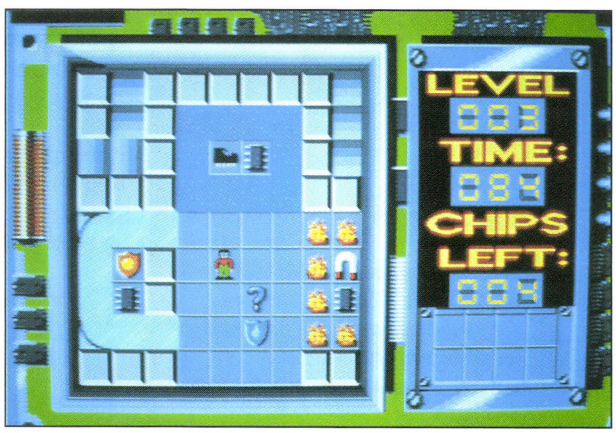
The sound effects are fairly good when played through an Ad Lib or Sound Blaster card. The music, however, is extremely monotonous. The game only has three or four different tunes, and all of them are very simple. After awhile, the music becomes so tiresome that the player will probably want to turn down the volume.

The amount of game play is satisfying. There is so much variety in the levels that even experienced puzzle solvers will be challenged. Only after all 144 levels are completed do the possibilities run out, and it takes so long to accomplish this that most players will stay busy for quite awhile.

Chip's Challenge is for anyone who enjoys solving puzzles and mazes. Those frustrated by games like this shouldn't buy it, but players who love to be challenged to use their minds (instead of their fingertips) will definitely find this their type of game.

—David Ethell

Epyx
600 Allerton St.
Redwood City, CA 94063
(415) 368-3200



Available previously on the Lynx, *Chip's Challenge* is a puzzle/maze game with 144 levels.

Might and Magic III: Isles of Terra

NEW WORLD COMPUTING INC.
Version: IBM PC ($59.95)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
SOUND/MUSIC							**7**			
GRAPHICS								**8**		
PLAYABILITY									**9**	
OVERALL								**8**		

Clear the hard drive, clear resident memory and clear a lot of time, because *Might and Magic III* has arrived. Complete with five races, ten character classes and a

half dozen major land masses, each with its share of towns and dungeons, this 3.5 megabytes of fantasy role-playing game will occupy as much time as players have to give.

The underlying premise of *Might and Magic III: Isles of Terra* is that the world was formed during a war among the four elements, who now have called a truce long enough to eliminate life from the planet. In response, the Five Forces of the Dome (complete with Latin names and obtuse domains) arose to help the intelligent species. Luckily, the poetry-laden rule book is short, because if the game were on a par with the rules, buyers would be scrambling for their receipts soon after character creation. However, this is one rare occasion when some technical details could have been helpful. Although players should not know the intricate mathematics behind a game, they should not have to spend excessive time and money determining the relative strengths of ring, chain, splint and scale armor.

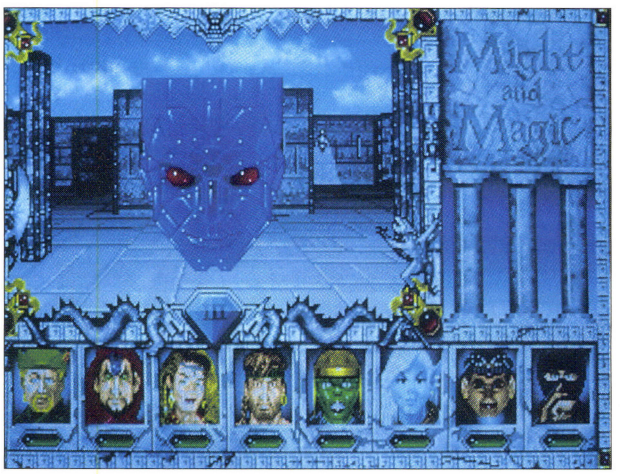
The designers attempted a different tack in programming this adventure—humor. Many of the monsters look as if artists drew sketches of the most bizarre creatures they could think of, and then assigned powers and attributes. How else could anyone account for the disembodied floating heads (called screamers) and the slithering green bubble men? The humor, like all aspects of the game, is accented by sharp, animated graphics. Even the gargoyles decorating the view screen move when foes or secret doors are nearby.

Might and Magic III contains a pregenerated party, but players have the option of creating their own characters. However, the computer-created characters are about the best possible, and anyone who replaces them needs a complete array of classes, especially considering the excessive cost of hirelings.

In addition to standard attributes and class-oriented skills, characters may also purchase an assortment of general skills. Some, such as cartography and directional sense, are not essential to solving the game but make play much easier. Others, like swimming and pathfinding, are required to move most places outside of city limits. But, like everything else in this game, they cost money.







The designers of *Might and Magic III: Isles of Terra* attempted a different tack in programming this adventure—humor.

In most role-playing games, gold piles up until it serves no discernible purpose. But monetary management is key to *Might and Magic III*, and this provides a welcome opportunity for noncombat strategy. Treasure comes in two forms: gold and the magic gems needed to cast higher level spells. Besides skills, training and equipment, expenses include magic spells (with accompanying fees for magic guild memberships), information and cures for poison, disease, curses and insanity. In addition, the Isles of Terra are filled with individuals ready to sell skills and arcane items of questionable worth, at exorbitant prices. Some do offer homegrown cures at bargain rates, so spending the time to explore Zingaro's wagons and shacks is well worthwhile.

Only serious combat tacticians will find *Might and Magic III* lacking. There are no combat screens, and the only character placement option is determining who is closest to the front lines. Even then, foes have a knack for attacking whoever is most vulnerable or most vital in combat; and protection spells are costly, but needed to keep spell casters fighting.

So, while getting through the rule book is not actually the most difficult challenge in *Might and Magic III*, it is, assuredly, the only unpleasant one in this thoroughly enjoyable game.

—Dave Moskowitz

Electronic Arts Distribution
1450 Fashion Island Blvd.
San Mateo, CA 94404
(415) 572-ARTS

Megafortress

THREE-SIXTY

Versions: Amiga ($59.95), IBM PC ($59.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

The EB-52 Megafortress is one of the most awesome weapons in America's arsenal. With a payload capacity of 192,000 pounds and the capability of altitudes from 50,000 feet to just a few hundred feet up, it is a versatile aircraft capable of carrying an incredible load. Now, for the first time, an average individual can control this impressive instrument of destruction through an excellent simulation.

SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

THE YEAR OF THE DRAKKHEN.

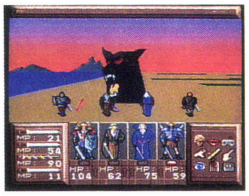


This is the year of Super NES.™ The year some of the best RPG players may go down in flames. Because this year you will enter the world of Drakkhen.



You've confronted many monsters before. But never fire-breathing beasts of such scorching realism. Over 50 giants and winged beasts in spellbinding 3-D. You've journeyed in other mystical lands. But none with scrolling, 360° landscapes with panoramic views. Horizons change from day to night before your very eyes.

In your quest to restore world peace, you will learn many powerful spells. Prepare for battle by collecting weapons and magical objects. But nothing will prepare you for the special effects, the eye-popping graphics, the stereo digital sound experience. Drakkhen. It's the Super NES game of the year. The role playing challenge of a lifetime.





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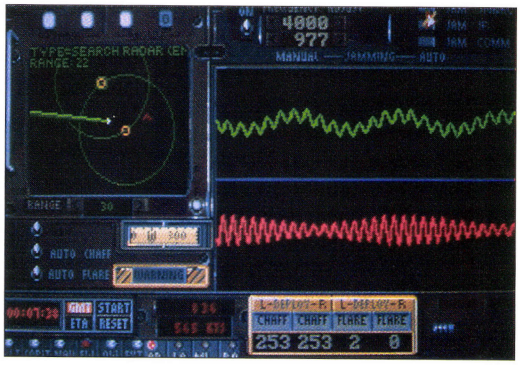
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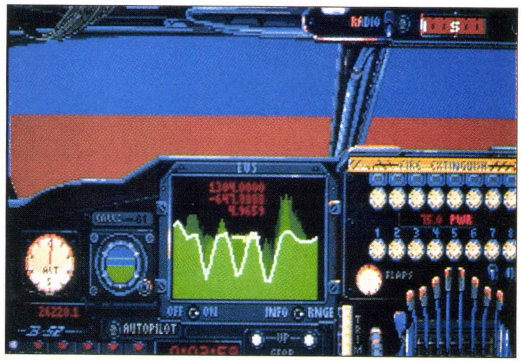
The first step in *Megafortress* is mission selection. There are three scenarios: The practice runs allow for bombing, in-flight refueling, navigation and evasion/battle with opposing MIGs. These missions are performed over the Nevada desert. The Persian Gulf missions are the "real thing," while Flight of the Old Dog concerns the elimination of a Russian radar station. The player is also responsible for loading the right ordnance—everything from laser-guided missiles to "runway buster" bombs is available.

The EB-52 is a complex aircraft, and the simulation accurately duplicates many of the required tasks. For example, if a hydraulic pump stops working, the player can try to restart it, but a variety of electrical devices may need to be reset. Fortunately, there is help, in the form of some automatic systems to engage while the player is occupied elsewhere.

The EB-52 carries a five-man crew, and the player performs the duties of them all. This keeps the gamer busier than a one-armed paperhanger, especially during the last stages of a mission, when each crew member must perform with utmost efficiency.

The five stations are pilot, copilot, navigator, EW Officer (electronic warfare) and OW Officer (offensive weapons). Each has a control panel unique to that station. The pilot is the aircraft commander, who controls the flight instruments and operation of the autopilot. The autopilot is especially important because the navigator can set "waypoints" on his electronic map, and the autopilot will automatically fly to those waypoints in order. Between the autopilot and the TAC (terrain avoidance computer), it is almost never necessary to fly the EB-52 manually.

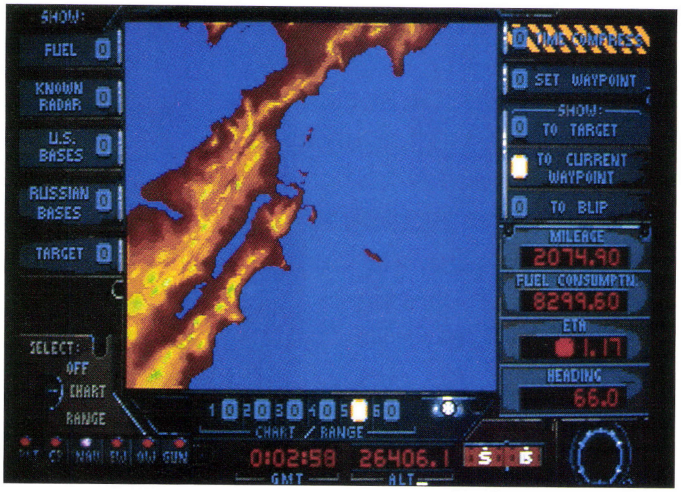


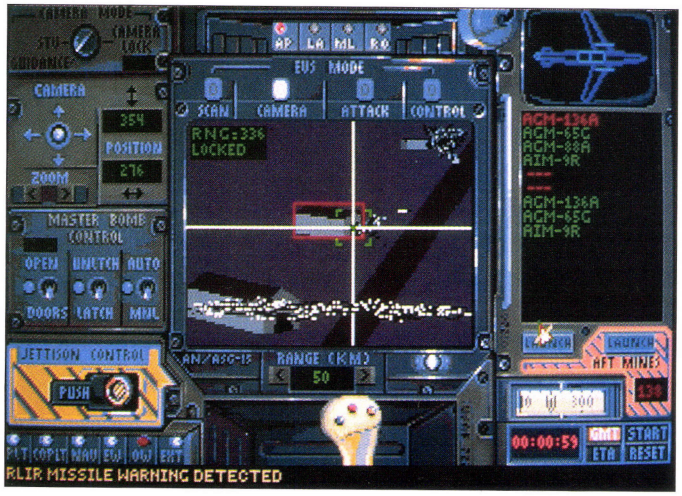


The electronic warfare station controls radar detection and electronic countermeasures, such as jamming, flare launch (to confuse IR tracking missiles) and chaff bundles (to confuse radar-guided missiles). To assist the busy player, this station features an automatic system for detecting and responding to threats. The offensive weapons station handles missile launches at pursuing aircraft, bomb drops and weapons guidance to target.

Each station has a radar panel that, in most cases, can either work as regular radar, as terrain radar (showing a radar picture of the ground ahead of the aircraft) or as an aimable camera.

Megafortress uses filled polygon graphics, and the animation was smooth on my 386-25. Various city landmarks show up as appropriate, and the control panels are well defined and brightly colored. The program supports mouse control; this is highly recommended for the many buttons and gauges used in flight. However, flying the aircraft works best with the arrow keys.





Three-Sixty's *Megafortress* is the type of program that doesn't provide immediate gratification, but is an accurate simulation of the EB-52.

The sound consisted of engine noise, various swooshes for chaff and flare launches and other assorted aircraft sounds. My Sound Blaster card was detected and used for sound effects.

Playability was a mixed bag. As expected from a simulation with the complexity of this one, there is a lot to do. Nevertheless, it is possible to master each mission, especially with help from the autopilot, automatic defense systems and terrain-avoidance computer. The program can be installed on a hard drive (advisable), but don't lose the excellent manual. Transponder response codes must be keyed in before each mission—essentially, the copy protection. Failure to enter the right code results in immediately being shot down by friendly forces.

One last caveat: *Megafortress* requires most of the 640K memory. TSRs and other memory users may cause the program not to work. I had to boot a "clean" system in order to get the game to run.

Overall, *Megafortress* is an accurate and complex simulation of an accurate

and complex aircraft. It is not an instant gratification type of program, but, if you are really interested in learning how to handle the EB-52, check it out. You won't be sorry.

—Dave Plotkin

Three-Sixty Pacific
2105 S. Bascom Ave., Suite 380
Campbell, CA 95008
(409) 776-2187

Western Front

STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS INC.
Versions: Amiga ($59.95), IBM PC ($59.95)

SOUND/MUSIC N/A										
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

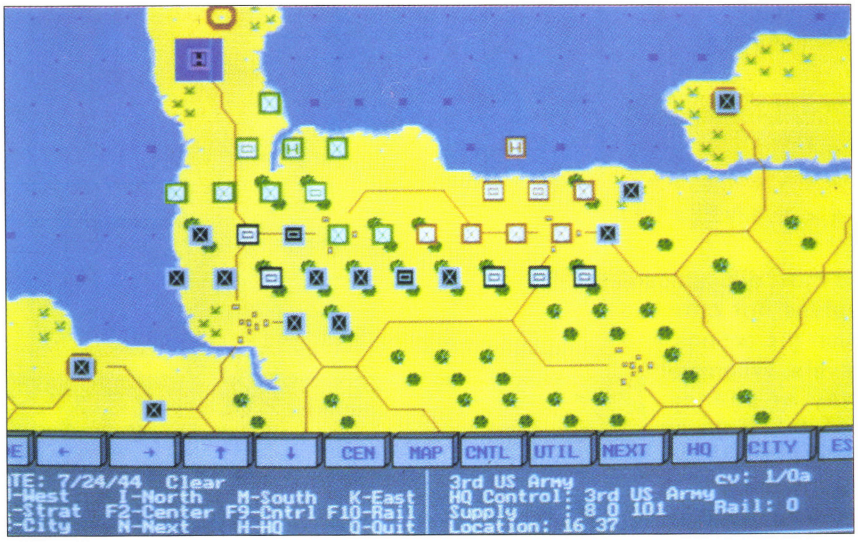
For as long as computer war gaming has existed, the guru of the genre for many players has been Gary Grigsby. Similarly, the recognized industry leader in this field has been Strategic Simulations. It is not surprising, therefore, that *Western Front: The Liberation of Europe, 1944-1945* should appear as the logical companion game to their last joint endeavor, *Second Front*, which chronicled the Wermacht's demise on the frozen steppes of Russia. Fortunately for fans of Mr. Grigsby, this latest offering improves on many of the shortfalls of the prior work, and also introduces functions unique to an amphibious campaign.

If one does not already have an appreciation for the sheer magnitude of the Allied invasion of Europe, *Western Front* will impress the fact upon the player. As this is not a game to be taken lightly, or in small doses, players who undertake the endeavor may find themselves out of contact with their loved ones for long periods of time.

Western Front offers three scenarios: Diadem, covering the Italian campaign; Breakout, chronicling Patton's "Hell on Wheels" sweep to the Rhine; and Bulge, depicting the dying gasp of the Wermacht in the Ardennes forest. Each is interesting in its own right, but not as comprehensive as some of the games devoted wholly to those battles. *Western Front*'s strength is the Campaign game, which re-creates all of the Allied operations from just prior to the Normandy invasion until the end of the war. Players retain some ability to alter the grand strategy by changing the landing beaches and the like, but one cannot explore some of the major historical alternatives, such as ignoring the Italian theater or invading in 1943.

The basic unit of maneuver for *Western Front* differs from its predecessor, having reduced from corps elements to divisions and even brigades. Correspondingly, each turn now represents only three to four days, instead of a week. Events in the Eastern theater still impact on the German defense, even though they occur off the map. Historically, the Germans were severely weakened in the West due to the need to reinforce the Eastern Front, where they were being bled dry. German players cannot escape this fate (even if they had previously defeated Russia in *Second Front*), and must be prepared to activate units at any moment to replace their crack divisions, which are pulled without notice.

As before, logistics are the cornerstone of any campaign. Industrial production fills the replacement pools from which units are rebuilt or upgraded. Given the tenuous nature of the initial Allied beachhead, it is imperative that the Allied player utilize a strong strategic bombing campaign to disrupt the German interior lines of communication and strong industrial base. *Western Front* models this portion of the game exceedingly well, allowing missions against factories, railways, bridges and strategic supply cities such as Dresden and Essen.



SSI's *Western Front* is an exceptional rendition of one of the largest military endeavors in history.

An interesting addition to the game is the use of political points, expanded to perform actions such as strategic bombing, the replacement of unit leaders and the like. A certain number of points are replenished each turn. As one might expect, amphibious and paradrop operations do not occur overnight. Consequently, Allied forces must accumulate points each turn for a sufficient buildup to transport all of their units across the English Channel for the invasion. Naval units are not depicted in the game, so one can consider these amphibious points to represent the delay

that the Allies actually experienced in amassing sufficient shipping in the U.K. for the operation.

Other improvements to the basic system include full mouse support, a major plus; a more detailed rules supplement, which allows diehards to get down into individual combat formulas if desired; and a greatly enhanced computer opponent. Unfortunately, the game lacks a map of the theater. The graphic interface is unchanged from *Second Front*, and sound support remains a tertiary feature for games of this nature.

Western Front is an exceptional rendition of one of the largest military endeavors in history. If one possesses the stamina for a couple hundred hours of play, it should not be missed.

—Ed Dille

Strategic Simulations Inc.
675 Almanor Ave., Suite 201
Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901
(408) 737-6800

Amarillo Slim Dealer's Choice

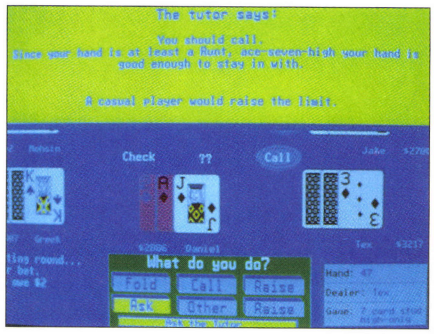
VILLA CRESPO SOFTWARE

Version: IBM PC ($49.95)

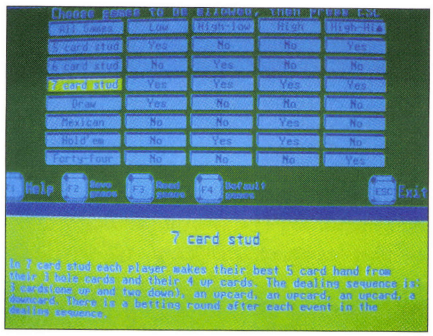
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

Poker is probably the most difficult card game, because it involves not only the luck of the draw but also the actions and reactions of human players. Whenever people get in the way of chance, "playing by the odds" takes on an entirely new meaning. *Amarillo Slim Dealer's Choice* continues the excellence of past Villa Crespo gambling titles with a poker game in which the gamer competes with up to seven computer players.

Although images of the players with changing facial expressions are missing from the game, *Dealer's Choice* is as close as a game can get to the "feel" of a real poker game. It requires little or no preparation to play, and every screen in the game has a help option. Most commands correspond to function keys or other single key presses. Players may also use the arrow keys or mouse to move a select bar in the menus, and the return key or mouse button can be used to enter commands.







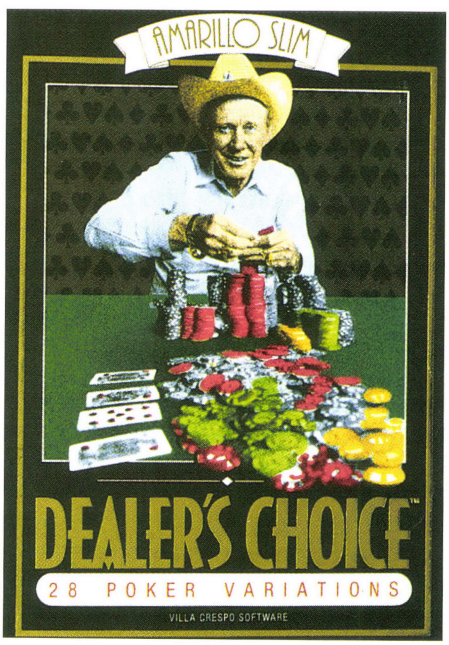
***Amarillo Slim Dealer's Choice's* high degree of flexibility should prepare any novice player for a real game in a casino.**

It is so effortless to use the *Amarillo Slim Dealer's Choice* interface that more time can be spent learning how to play poker effectively.

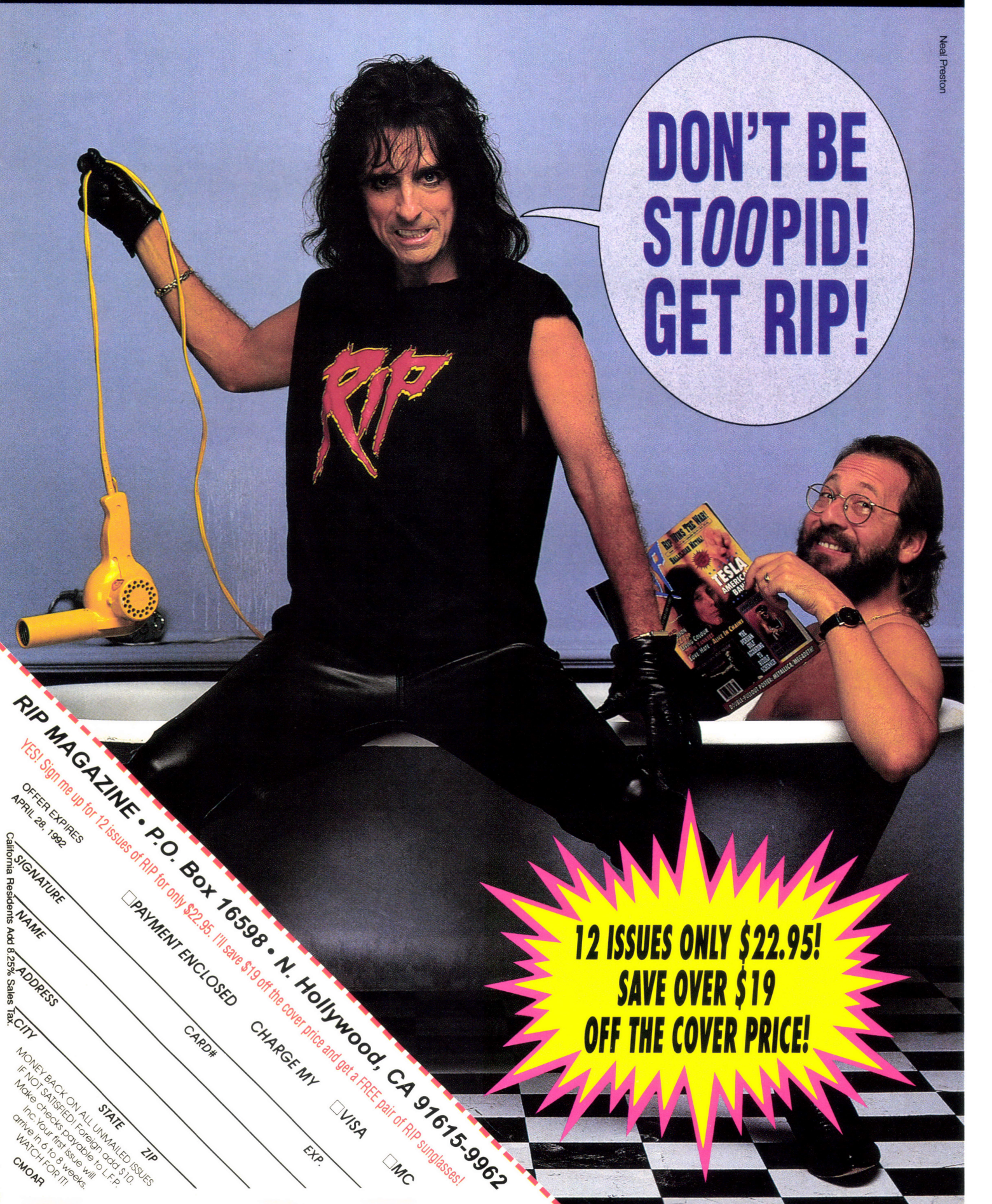
The program plays 28 variations of poker, a hefty number of different games, but only the pros should attempt to activate more than a few games at once. The game takes its name from the ability of the dealer to choose from among the different variations on each hand, an approach that requires quick-thinking players who can shift from one set of rules to another easily. Because of this high degree of flexibility, *Dealer's Choice* should prepare any novice player for a real game in a casino or back room.

There are many rules and options that can be set, and this is how players may best practice the game. Success in games with simpler rules builds up confidence and skills that transfer over to more difficult games. The options and rules screens are so intuitive that game set up should only take a minute or two. Another feature is the statistics accumulation that the program performs. Many categories of statistics tabulation are available for informational purposes and to help out the player.

The most important feature of *Dealer's Choice* is the online help option. At any point in the game, the player may bring up messages that describe the function of the current screen. These messages take the place of a manual. Also in-



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valuable to game play is the advice that gamblers can bring up for each hand. This advice from the program helps players learn how to win; it's specific and not only reveals the best choice of action, but also the reasoning behind the suggestion.

Don't look for fancy graphics in *Dealer's Choice*. The card faces are rather simplistic, and the other screens mostly contain text. However, excellent graphics aren't too important in a gambling simulation; the most important element to consider is the clarity of the card faces. These are instantly recognizable, and that's all you really need. There are some digitized pictures of Amarillo Slim, but, on the whole, *Dealer's Choice* is more impressive in the sound department. The other players at the table announce their choices of action, whether it be "call," "raise" or other options. Each player has a different voice, and this nice touch adds personality to the game.

Dealer's Choice has everything a poker player could want, including enough rule variations and computer opponents to keep gamers busy for a long time. Packed in a slick, attractive box, the program reflects the commitment to gambling simulations that Villa Crespo made over a year ago. It teaches as you play, and it prepares anyone for a night of poker with live players. Ante up!

—R.C.

Villa Crespo Software
1725 McGovern St.
Highland Park, IL 60035
(708) 433-0500

Ski-ulator, by newcomer Eagle Graphics, is a first-person-perspective downhill ski racing simulator.



Ski-ulator

EAGLE GRAPHICS
Version: IBM PC ($39.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	**3**	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10

Ski-ulator is a downhill ski racing simulator by newcomer Eagle Graphics. The generic manual refers to downhill as the glamour event of Alpine ski racing. It makes no sense to question such a statement; Eagle Graphics claims to be a company made up of skiing experts, based in a part of the country known for skiing (Eagle, Colorado). However, there is little glamour in its simulation.

In all fairness, as a first product *Ski-ulator* isn't bad. The display is in high resolution (640 x 350). Its best attribute, though, is the speed at which the simulator runs, 30 frames per second (on a 16 MHz machine). While not quite arcade speed (50 fps), it does clip along with screen updates that are smooth and flicker free.

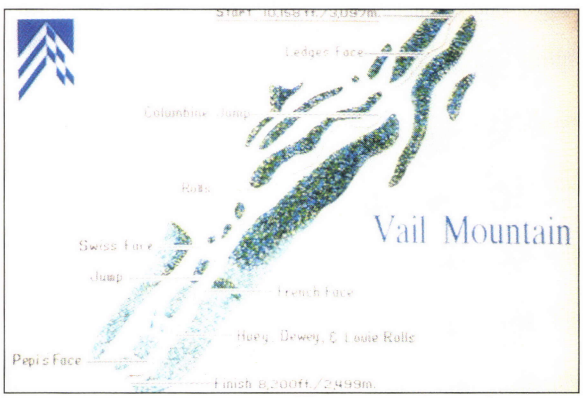


Ski-ulator is in first person perspective—only the tips of the player's skis can be seen. A sprite engine seems to have been employed, instead of a polygon-fill 3-D environment, which makes it all the more remarkable that the designers were able to achieve such a good 3-D effect. However, this has not been without cost.

There are three levels of difficulty: Beginner, Advanced and World Class. The levels increase in maximum attainable speed, and become progressively less forgiving. Two courses (developed from detailed survey maps) are provided: the men's downhill course at Beaver Creek and the women's downhill course at Vail.

While the keyboard is fully supported, a joystick is definitely recommended for controlling the player's on-screen counterpart. A left or right movement of the stick does the obvious (turns in the corresponding direction), forward increases "tuck" (tuck means you're standing upright), back decreases tuck. Developing a feel for the state of tuck required for each time a player catches "air" (skis over a bump or lip) is necessary in order to complete each course successfully. A meter displayed on-screen reminds the player of the current "state of tuck."

Now the bad news. The game has no sound card support and only minimal beeps and boops from the onboard PC speaker. Sixteen colors is the maximum this release supports (although a VGA version is promised). With limited colors comes limited on-screen detailing, namely a white powder background with no indications of peaks or valleys and only colored dots to mark the outside boundaries of the courses.



Finally, Eagle Graphics promises "spectacular crashes." I don't know how they define spectacular, but being hauled away on a stretcher, to the tune of a funeral dirge done in PC speaker beeps, is not my idea of spectacular.

Ski-ulator is a nice first effort, but Eagle Graphics

should have waited until they were ready to ship the VGA version.

—Frank Eva

Eagle Graphics Co.
P. O. Box 2435
Ellicot City, MD 21041
(800) 253-8712

The Lost Admiral

QUANTUM QUALITY PRODUCTIONS INC.
Version: IBM PC ($59.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	**10**
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

The Lost Admiral is as rare a find as a hen's tooth. The fact that it is also the first title of a fledgling new software company seems incomprehensible in the face of many less capable products from known publishers. As the ratings indicate, the graphics and sound of *The Lost Admiral* are not polished by market standards, but one should not infer that to apply to all aspects of the game.

The Lost Admiral is a strategic naval war game in the tradition of *Risk* and *Empire*. Like these venerable classics, it offers a depth and variety of play that will entice gamers to return again and again. Further, the artificial intelligence of the computer opponent is so advanced that players will not be forced to continually search for human opposition.



QQP's *The Lost Admiral* is a must-have program that will undoubtedly achieve "classic" status.

Don't expect a tactical realism, such as that depicted in simulations like *Harpoon*. *The Lost Admiral*'s emphasis is the establishment of sea control, defense of critical home ports, resource management and strategic maneuver.

Players begin each scenario with a specific number of "buy points," utilized to purchase units for the fleet, and may opt for a mix of any of the following: aircraft carriers, battleships, cruisers, destroyers, PT boats, submarines, attack transports, transports and gun emplacements. During the initial purchase, players also specify the starting home port of each unit. Ports may contain an unlimited number of units (all other squares are limited to two) but only the top two units of the stack may defend if the port is attacked. Further, each port must contain either a transport or an attack transport at the end of each turn for the player to receive the victory points for that turn. There is no such thing as an optimum mix of units, due to the sheer variety of potential situations one has to face. Even in the set versus the random scenarios, one can experiment with numerous force mixes to accomplish the mission.

Each unit has some unique characteristics that govern its employment. Aircraft carriers offer the greatest diversity, due to special attributes that may be selected. Among these are "Far-Aider," which adds damage to friendly attacks within two squares, "Far-Sighter," which spots enemy units out to four squares, "Ship Repair," which rebuilds damaged ships that are co-located with the carrier at the end of the turn, "Far-Mover," which has twice the movement allocation of normal carriers and "City Neutralizer," which neutralizes victory points for enemy ports within five squares. Each of these attributes, if selected, can alter one's strategy for a given scenario.

Unfortunately, carriers are very expensive and cannot defend themselves well if left to their own devices. Battleships are the premier offensive weapon, but are particularly vulnerable to enemy submarines. As such, they should be escorted by cruisers or destroyers. Submarines are effective against all units except submerged enemy subs. Further, they can be made stealthy against all combatants except destroyers and PT boats, thereby allowing the occasional raider to slip past the enemy defenses and wreak havoc behind the lines.

The Lost Admiral offers ten levels of difficulty, can take weather effects into account and even has a "limited fuel and ammo" option that forces players to take (and defend) transports within their battle groups or face being stranded far from home as an easy target. Nine maps are included with the game, each corresponding to different scenarios. Further, these scenarios may be played with random maps, which significantly alter each replay. Fourteen campaigns are also offered, which utilize a combination of standard and random maps to keep players on their toes. Each scenario lasts less than an hour, and no two games are alike.

Finally, *The Lost Admiral* offers a nice tracking package, which keeps statistics on each player's progress from Seaman 1st Class to Admiral of the Fleet. Reaching the final rank will not be easy for any player, but players of all skill levels will enjoy the attempt. *The Lost Admiral* is simply a must-have program that will undoubtedly achieve "classic" status in its own right!

—E.D.

Quantum Quality Productions Inc.
1046 River Ave.
Flemington, NJ 08822
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1991: The Year That It All Happened in Electronic Gaming

by Arnie Katz

Writer, editor, lecturer and game designer Arnie Katz knows the field from every perspective. Each month, his column takes readers inside the world of video and computer games. This month, Arnie looks back at the year just ended and tries to put everything in proper perspective.

I've finally found something good to say about the two- to three-month lead time that bedevils newsstand publications, including this one. Given the actual on-sale date of this issue of VG&CE, many of you approach this column with the pounding head and shaky hands that are the aftermath of enthusiastic holiday partying. I, on the other hand, am bothered only by a slight "too full" feeling (and maybe a bit of sugar shock) from Halloween.

That's a good thing, because I need an especially clear mind for my annual look back at the electronic-gaming year. Only the passage of time can establish 1991's place in the hobby's history, but it seemed a particularly momentous 12 months. So many significant things happened that analysts may eventually judge it a turning point—the dawn of a new age of interactive-electronic entertainment. The final verdicts won't come in for half a decade or so, but that won't stop us from examining 1991's major trends and banner headlines.

Electronic Arts and Warner Make Multimedia Deal

Here come the big boys! As a result of an October agreement between Electronic Arts and Warner Communications, Trip Hawkins now heads a company with full control of all Warner and EA optical media activities.

This is the first beachhead in the coming invasion of electronic gaming by big-time entertainment companies. There will be others. It is not appropriate to "name any names" at this time, but several other software publishers currently are takeover/merger targets. The leisure conglomerates have apparently decided that now is the time to get into interactive-electronic entertainment, and that the best way is to buy an existing share. This gives a company without previous experience instant access to talent, market share and distribution channels.

Video- and computer-game companies are small compared to, say, Paramount Communications Inc. They are usually fairly lean, and many have good cash reserves. This makes them juicy targets for acquisition.

Mediagenic Files for Chapter 11

How ironic that the first independent video-game cartridge maker should fall upon such hard times in the midst of a video-game boom! The name change from Activision must've made sense to *someone*, but I thought it symbolic of management's lack of pride in the company's own history.

The Mediagenic bankruptcy shows again that attention to the basics means everything in the video- and computer-game business. Mediagenic had many talented people, but it lost the knack of orchestrating those skills in such a way as to produce excellent video games.

The foundation of Mediagenic's problems is that its products were not as good as the competition. The publisher failed to adapt to changing tastes.

This is often the lamentable fate of the pioneering operation. How

many of the manufacturers who put automobiles on America's roads in the early 20th century are still producing cars today? The electronic-gaming field has had such casualties and, sadly, will have more.

Perhaps bankruptcy will be Mediagenic's salvation. Financial straits may force the company to confront its product problems, which is the first step toward restoring its image as a quality-game maker.

Electronic Arts Buys Distinctive Software

The industry jolted to attention when Sierra On-Line bought Dynamix, but *this* bold move could touch off a rush to lock up creative resources. Every major independent software developer with credentials is getting multi-million-dollar offers. I'll be shocked if another big house isn't sold to a publisher by the time this VG&CE reaches you.

Apple and IBM Start Cooperation

It took mutual fear of Microsoft to do it, but this country's two premier computer companies are trying to work together. The most intriguing venture is a new computer with IBM chips and Apple desktop. Scheduled to hit the market in two years, this could be the combination of features that will really put home computers over with the public. The IBM PC has become the home computing standard, it is true; but the difficulties of DOS limit the system's appeal to electronic gamers.

U.S. Cartridge Business Gains

Japan still dominates the design and manufacture of video-game cartridges, but American developers and publishers have reclaimed a piece of the industry. Titles like *NHL Hockey* (EA for the Genesis) and *Toe Jam & Earl* (Sega for the Genesis) were among the best of last year's new games and point the way out of the side-scroller rut.



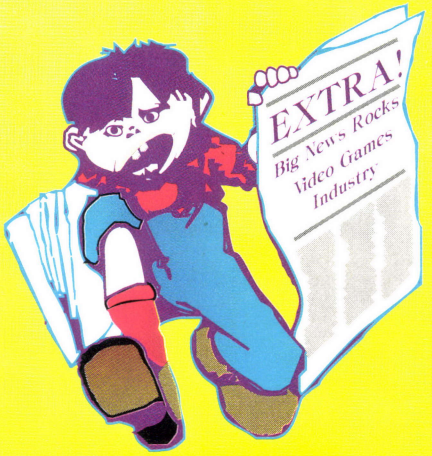
Nintendo, Sega Announce CD Peripherals

This greatly expands the potential market for optical media games. It is relatively easy to port CD games among systems, so the opportunity to sell CD titles to video as well as computer gamers will permit the publishers to spread the enormous development costs over more SKUs (stock keeping units). I'll examine the potential of CD video games in detail next month.

Software Publishers Raise Hardware Requirements for Top Games

Access, Origin and Sierra On-Line are three of many computer-game companies that have introduced titles that require a 386SX or equivalent. The 286 series was a landmark in home computing, but the faster operating speed of the 386SX makes possible lightning-quick games like *Wing Commander II*.

State-of-the-art computer games require a hard disk and lots of internal RAM, and many would work better on CD than the stack of conventional disks they now require.



CES Opens Doors to the Public

I'd like to think my column had some influence, but, whatever the inspiration, the decision to open two days of the Chicago 1992 Summer Consumer Electronics Show is welcome news. Now gamers can walk the aisles and see the latest developments for themselves! Maybe the companies in hotel suites will allot a little time for rank-and-file gamers, too, so that players who attend CES get to see everything.

Atari Starts Work on Jaguar Video-Game System

It was the most tantalizing rumor to rip through the video-game industry in 1991. Atari axed the Panther when it decided that it wouldn't have enough technological superiority. Latest word is that Atari will build a 64-bit console. Projects fall apart every day, of course, but a successful Jaguar would pump life into the entire U.S. video-gaming scene.

Gamers Accept 16-Bit Video Games

The Genesis and Super NES won consumer favor in 1991, though both combined will never equal the size of the 8-bit installed base in this country. Over 3.5 million American gamers now own a 16-bit machine, and that could double by the end of 1992. Video gaming has survived the sensitive transition to new technology, so the hobby is now set to keep its popularity into the mid-1990s.

Notice how many of the big stories are likely to have a 1992 or even 1993 payoff for gamers? As exciting as 1991 was, things are going to get even livelier in the next 24 months. Speaking as one gamer to another, I can hardly wait!

COMPUTER STRATEGIES

Becoming a Master Builder of Castles

INTERPLAY

Versions: Amiga, IBM PC, Macintosh

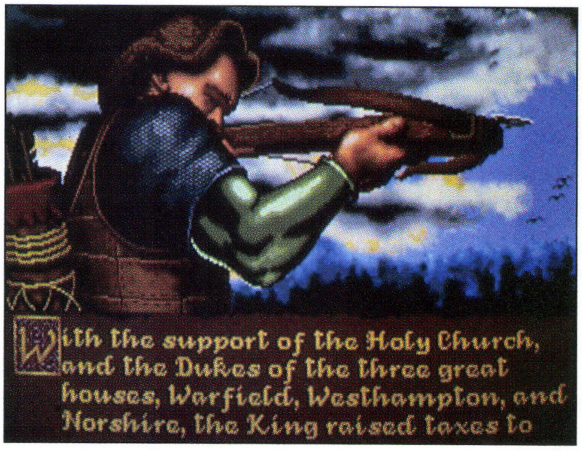
This is the game for anyone who wants to be a king. In this contest, a player must build castles and then successfully defend them from enemy attacks. For a single game, up to eight castles may have to be built. The player doesn't just make decisions as a king, but also as a master mason, overseeing the design and construction of the structures.

Building castles is not a simple matter of throwing up a few walls and then putting men on them for defense. It requires some thought as to the correct placement of the castle itself, where the gate will be located, the type of towers to be placed along the walls, plus how high and thick the walls will be. Not only is it necessary to consider the physical structure of the castle, but also how it will be paid for, how it will be defended and who is going to build it.

The first thing to do is get counsel. A counselor can advise you of how big the castle has to be when it is completed in order to collect the maximum amount of taxes, and this should make the size determination for you.

Next, look at the area on which the castle will be built. Try to find a location that has water on the site. If the castle is to have a moat, it must be built close to water. The best way to look at a site is in the design view; use a castle piece (a wall section is best) to see where it is and is not possible to place pieces. Once you have an idea of where pieces of a castle can go, it is time to start designing the castle.

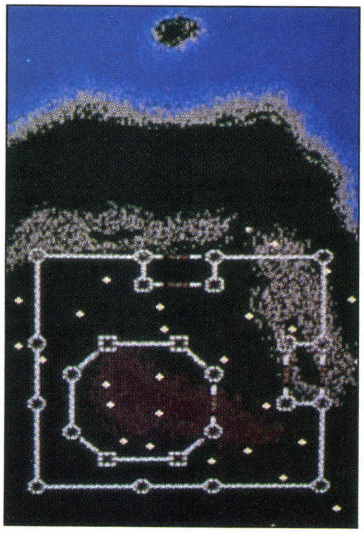
At that point, keep in mind that towers cannot be used to pour oil on attackers, but they are needed to support wall sections and change wall directions. Square towers are built faster than circular towers, but square towers aren't as strong.



Gates are the weakest part of a castle; it might be best to put several gates together, one behind the other. Another strategy for gates is to recess them in the wall so that archers can fire down on any attackers at the gate.



It is best to lay out most, if not all, of the castle instead of only placing sections when workers are available to work on them. The reason for this is that, when hiring an army, the number of men attracted depends on the layout size of the castle and not how close the castle is to completion. Designing pieces to a castle only when workers are available means that there might not be enough men to defend the castle.



Once the castle is ready to be built, hire workers. But, before spending all sorts of money to hire hundreds of workers, start with 90 workers, which is the maximum number that can work on a single piece. Then experiment with the proportions of types of workers until the efficiency rating is good or excellent. Hire more workers in the same ratio to keep the rating the same.

After the first castle, hire the same number of each type of worker as you did in the initial effort, but be prepared to make some adjustments, depending on the location of the castle. For example, if a location is close to quarries, a lot of carters aren't needed; but, if the stone is difficult to work, more quarrymen should be hired.

Follow this schedule, and you'll soon master the art of designing and building top-quality castles.

—John Schnyder

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The Terminator

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Version: IBM PC

The Terminator is an action-packed arcade duel that pits a player against the computer or against a player on another computer with a null modem cable link. There are two roles to play: the Terminator, a cyborg sent back in time to present-day Los Angeles to kill Sarah Connor; and Kyle Reese, the human sent back from the same time to protect Sarah, whose termination will cause the future to change so that humans will have no hope of survival.

The game begins with Kyle having found Sarah, and the player who controls Kyle also has limited control of Sarah. The player can tell her to run away, to stay in one place, to follow Kyle or to take and give objects used in the game. Don't be afraid of losing Sarah when you tell her to run away; just command her to follow Kyle and she will come back.

When playing a full game, each character must find weapons and try to kill the other character. Both the Terminator and Kyle can only carry a certain weight, so it is important to pick the weapons carefully. Don't get one of every type of weapon. For example, an AK-47 and an M-16 are practically the same thing. Don't carry both of these weapons when one will do.

The player controlling Kyle will probably want to go to an armory for some type of powerful weapon, such as a Stinger missile or M-60 machine gun. While grenades seem to be powerful weapons, they are hard to throw accurately, especially in the heat of battle. The Stingers are probably the easiest to aim because, once







they are locked on a target, the rockets guide themselves. In the armory, remember to get special weapons. (And don't forget the ammunition!)

Red triangles mark the locations of the armories on the map. The question-and-answer section of the manual also mentions the locations.

When traveling through the city, it is best to use the fast travel mode to get around. This mode lets a character move without having to constantly look around for approaching danger.

Whenever the enemy is near, the player exits the fast travel mode. Unlike traveling in the normal mode, the fast travel mode lets the player have a better chance of firing the first shot. The Terminator player should be relentless in hunting down Kyle. Don't be concerned with killing Sarah; if Kyle is wasted, the game is over. The Terminator should carry enough ammunition so that he can pursue and eliminate Kyle. If the ammunition runs out, Kyle has enough time to rearm and heal himself.

When playing Kyle and ammunition runs out for one of the heavy weapons, be sure to drop it, so that Kyle can move quickly. Try to fight near cars or vans so, if things get too dangerous, a quick getaway is possible.

Kyle is a more difficult character to play well, but, with a little practice and some good weapons, it is possible to save the human race.

—J.S.

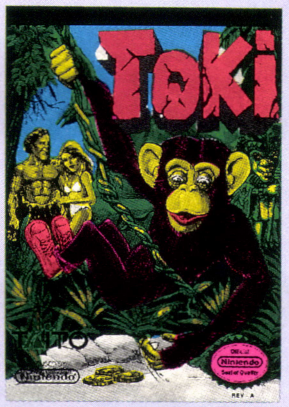
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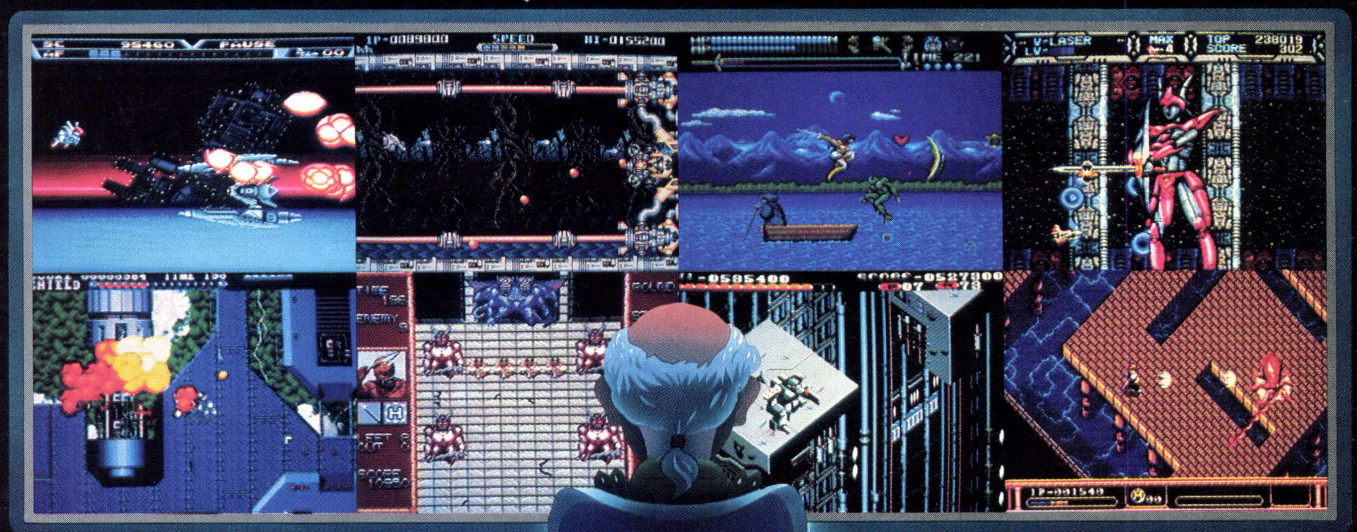
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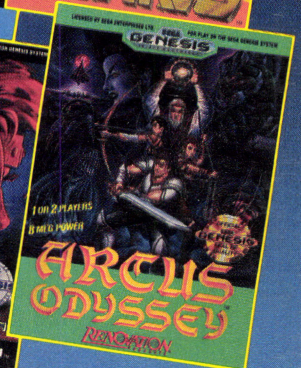












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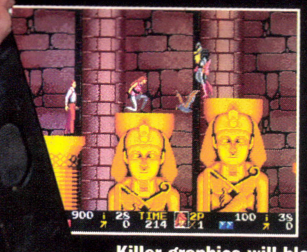
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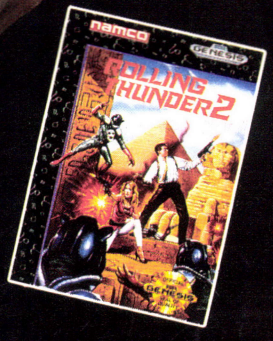
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